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ANNE SHERWOOD:

OR, THE

SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS OF ENGLAND.

Handwritten note: The first volume of the series is now published.

“ Il faut ôter les masques des choses, aussi bien que des personnes ! ”

MONTAIGNE.

“ Per me si va nella città dolente :

Per me si va nell' eterno dolore :

Per me si va tra la perduta gente. ”—DANTE.

“ Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease, and with the contempt of the proud. ”—Ps. cxxiii., *Bible Version*.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1857.

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TO
MRS. BEECHER STOWE.

MADAM,

Though personally unknown to you, and consequently deprived of the opportunity of requesting your consent to this dedication, I am induced to believe, by the spirit which breathes through your own admirable writings, that the cause of the oppressed will always find a responsive echo in your heart; and that every attempt to expose a wrong, or to suggest a remedy for that wrong, will enlist your sympathies. I feel honoured by dedicating the following volumes to the benefactress of the *black slave*.

I am, Madam,

Your obedient servant,

BERKELEY-AIKIN.

Gen. R. R. Ray 24 Dec 31 Ch. 1000 = 38

P R E F A C E.

MANY novels of a romantic character have been written, purporting to portray the *governess life*; many of them good and excellent in design, yet more good and excellent in execution. The theme has enlisted the sympathy, and employed the pen of gifted men, and scarcely less gifted women, until a subject in itself sufficiently homely and uninviting, has been invested with a poetic garb, concealing too frequently its own *sordid under-garments*.

The graceful and pleasant books alluded to, are very charming fancy pieces, in which the distressed and persecuted governess heroine goes through unheard-of trials, meets with incredible injustice, sometimes treads on the verge of mental—if not physical—martyrdom, but emerges from the fire of unmerited affliction, in every instance,

like gold—refined, in proportion to the heat of the furnace in which she has been martyring.

It is said that when General Canrobert viewed the fatal but glorious charge, when

“Into the valley of death rode the six hundred!”

he exclaimed with the enthusiasm of bravery, yet with the critical acumen of a practised soldier, “C’est magnifique ! mais ce n’est pas la guerre !” So are we sometimes constrained to say, when one of these immaculate heroines comes forth from the house of bondage “an angel still,” as she has been an angel all through her trials, and meets with the due reward of virtue (an immense rise in the social scale, a marriage uniting love and interest, or a colossal fortune from an old Indian uncle, before supposed dead)—“C’est magnifique ! mais ce n’est pas *la vie*.” No, no, it is not life ! The governess who has passed through the usual ordeal in *the social institutions* of aristocratic England—unless, indeed, she have borne with her to the governess life, high, exalted principles of religion and honour—is more likely to become *hardened* than *purified* ; more likely to become *morose* and *ill-tempered* than a *saint*-

like, patient martyr; in many instances, alas! more likely to become *cunning* and *deceitful* than to continue faithful and upright. “My behaviour have I learnt from my entertainment.” In the present generation the mothers of England are strangely blind to their own interests, and to those of their children, strangely blind to the fact that they are daily arming their slaves against themselves!

In the following volumes an attempt has been made (how successfully must be left to the impartial reader to decide) to delineate neither fictitious scenes nor fictitious characters, but individuals, groups, and tableaux from *real existence*. For this purpose materials for the work have been carefully collected during *ten years*; evidence has been gathered from sources above suspicion, in addition to that obtained by personal observation.

Anne Sherwood may be regarded as the united testimony of some ninety or a hundred professional gentlewomen representing their class. Not one solitary record of the governess life herein related has been even coloured with the pencil of exaggeration; bare *facts* have been stated, and in many instances

circumstances have been suppressed which were either unfit for the public eye, or of so highly improbable an appearance, that, if related, they would not have met with credence.

Though anxious to draw exclusively from real life, the author of *Anne Sherwood* has been, for obvious reasons, careful to avoid whatever might prove painful to individuals, and has consequently altered dates, localities, and, in many instances, the social position of the characters.

Obliged by the taste of the age to adopt the form of the novel, instead of the graver style, in which one of the most crying evils of our land might perhaps with more propriety have been discussed, the author must entreat the reader's indulgence for the probable defects of narrative, &c. None of those defects have arisen from wilful carelessness; and whatever the eye of the critic may find to condemn (much it will certainly discover), it is confidently hoped that the public at large, taken in the extended sense, almost always a generous public, will at least sympathise with an attempt to expose and ameliorate the condition of *the White Slaves of England*. "Courage to speak the truth, though it be

out of favour and fashion; to stand by the right when it is not the winning side; to give the *wrong* its true name, no matter what my Lord may think or my Lady will say—that is the courage most wanted in these days!”

CHELSEA, 1857.

ANNE SHERWOOD.

CHAPTER I.

THE latest news in Merton (a village not far from L——, in Yorkshire) was, that the Vicar was dead. There was nothing strange in the news, for the Vicar was an old man, and had long been an ailing one; yet it created an extraordinary sensation. He had spent all his life in the village; from youth to age had walked among his people in single-minded integrity and unostentatious holiness. He had been poor—literally poor,—but of his scant means, oft and again he had imparted help to his yet poorer flock; and when he was constrained to say, “Silver and gold have I none,” his large-hearted charity found other issues for its copious streams. Mr. Sherwood had been, in truth,

the father of his flock, and had fallen with his armour on, having expired at the altar, immediately after the administration of the Eucharist. Never, perhaps, had a more solemn scene been witnessed than that of the white-haired pastor, who had struggled bravely with sickness and suffering, finally laying down his life at the foot of the very altar at which he had ministered; and his people felt it as they should. To them his death was more a triumphant translation than aught else, and for himself gain immeasurable, though to others a desolating bereavement.

Mr. Sherwood had left two daughters—motherless, friendless, and portionless. Perhaps, had not the good old man been caught so suddenly from earth to heaven, the possible destitution of his children would have pressed on his spirit; but he had been spared that pang, and was at rest.

It was evening—sunset on an autumn evening. All was mournful and deathlike without, as the wind swept the sere leaves from the trees, making sport of their lost glories! Yet more mournful was the scene within, where the Vicar's daughters sat on the ground, bowed down with sorrow, beside

the cold, sad relics of mortality. They sat with their arms folded round each other, the face of the younger hidden in her sister's neck, while the elder bent over her with an air of protection almost maternal. Their low, stifled sobs alone broke the silence of the room. So far they had only felt and seen their bereavement; care for the future had not once intruded on the sacredness of their sorrow. There they sat—poor, desolate girls!—with no other light than the chilling moonbeams stealing into the chamber of death, till the solemn midnight hour sounded from the old church tower, and then Annie Sherwood rose, and led her young sister away.

“Let us stay! we are best here!” said Ellen. “Oh, that I had died for him, or with him! Father, father! my precious father!” exclaimed she, with a fresh burst of agonised grief.

“You would have left me alone then, Ellen!—alone to struggle with life!”

“Oh, no!” said Ellen, fondly; “I spoke foolishly. But what is there to live for, Annie? What have we to do in this world?”

“Much,” said Annie; “much more than

you think of, Ellen ! We have a work to perform in the shadowy future that you little dream of now ! Come, Ellen, you will go with me ?”

There was a degree of volition in Annie Sherwood’s voice—something unexplained, but powerful, which made her younger sister instinctively yield her will, and follow where she directed. Both sisters bent down reverently over the marble-cold face of their saintly father, and left it wet with tears ; but when Annie led her sister away, her step was firmer and more composed than that of Ellen. As they walked together, hand in hand, the sisters formed a strange contrast. Ellen was tall, slight, and graceful ; but her delicate complexion, her long, bright, fair hair and blue eyes—blue as the violets,—showed no mental power, no character, but gentleness and affection. Annie Sherwood was all but short—dark, and with very little pretension to beauty,—perhaps, had not one correct feature, unless it were the large grey eye, that lit up sometimes with a world of meaning, and the broad clear brow, in which the intellectual faculty was unusually developed. Common observers would have passed Annie Sherwood by unnoticed, as the last

woman in the world formed for admiration ; but when she spoke, she had—whether consciously or not—the art of riveting attention, and that exclusively. Every one thought Ellen beautiful, and she was so ; no one considered Annie even pretty, but yet none who had conversed with her, ever forgot her. Ellen was not exactly clever, but intelligent and accomplished, as far as her limited opportunities had gone ; that is, she played the piano tolerably well, and with taste ; sang sweetly, drew landscapes, and knew some French, and a little less Italian. Annie knew none of these things. She had had the same advantages as Ellen, but had learnt nothing of music, had no voice, less ear, could not draw a straight line, and knew no modern language but her own. Still, Annie knew a great deal in her way. She was a good Greek and Latin scholar ; she had laid up a strange mass of heterogeneous knowledge ; had read every book that came in her way, and hunted up those that were out of her way. Her poor father, himself a man of taste and acquirements, had possessed a curious, though not very valuable collection of old books, and had felt more secret pride and pleasure in seeing his Annie hoarding up

treasures of knowledge "in her own odd way," as he called it, than in watching the progress of her fairer sister, in what might be considered more feminine accomplishments. Yet he loved his children equally; some even thought that the gentle Ellen had the larger share in his heart; for Annie was hasty, and naturally inclined to resentment; but she was noble and generous, and he was proud of her, poor, simple man! and when his mind's eye looked forward, he saw Annie the firm supporter of her more yielding and timid sister—her example in all that was good and high-minded.

The funeral was over. The man of God was laid to rest in the churchyard of his beloved village, beneath a dark, shadowy tree, and the orphan girls had turned away from the new-made grave, with feelings of almost utter desolation. On re-entering their lonely home, Annie involuntarily exclaimed, as her eye rested on the scene endeared to her by the tenderest recollections, "It will be indeed a trial to leave it."

"To leave it!" ejaculated Ellen: "why should we?"

"Why?" repeated Annie, who well knew that forethought formed no part of her

sister's character. "My poor, dear Ellen, is it possible that you have forgotten what must be! that we must yield our places to the new Vicar and his family? Don't you know, dear child, that they will perhaps soon arrive?"

"Yes, yes, I know all about it," said Ellen; "but you know Mr. Everard is not at all a rich man: he has, besides, a small family; so he and his wife might be glad to let us two rooms, and then——"

"Very likely indeed," said Annie.

"And then you know, Annie," said Ellen, "as they say Mrs. Everard is so amiable, and has such sweet children, we should gain valuable friends, perhaps——"

"All you say is very true," interrupted Annie; "a delightful plan, if it could only be accomplished! But what are we to live on, Ellen?"

"So little would suffice us," said Ellen.

"Very true; but if that little be wanting! if we have nothing?"

"I suppose we must see about selling the books, and the furniture, and the——"

"I think we must summon the auctioneer on Monday," said Annie.

"So soon!" exclaimed Ellen.

"Yes, dear," said Anne, gently; "whatever has to be done, should be done promptly. It would not do to inconvenience Mrs. Everard, by allowing her to find us unprepared on her arrival. Of course it is a trial even to part from the inanimate objects so long familiarized by association—the very chairs in which our precious father has sat, the books he has read! But, alas! it must be, Ellen—it must be!"

"Sell a part," suggested Ellen.

"Do you know about how much the whole would produce?" asked Annie.

"Perhaps a hundred pounds," said Ellen.

"Probably forty!"

"But we could live on that a long time—a very long time!" said Ellen.

"And when the forty was gone, Ellen—what then?"

"I don't know," said Ellen, dejectedly.

"I know you don't, poor girl; but I do, Ellen. We must work for our living."

"At what?"

"We must be governesses."

"Oh, yes, that will be delightful!" said Ellen; only she added, more sadly, "We must leave Merton, Annie."

"Of course we must," replied Annie.

“For myself, I feel I shall be strong to bear whatever may await me in the shape of trial; for you only I tremble, dear Ellen!”

“Nay, you must not be anxious about me,” said the young girl—for Ellen was but eighteen; Annie had had four more years’ experience of life;—“I shall do well, I am sure; if anything could soften the blow our dear father’s loss has given, anything compensate for parting with you, Annie, and parting from this dear place, it would be living with sweet children.”

“But you will have others to live with besides children: parents—perhaps grandfathers, grandmothers, uncles, aunts, and cousins,—and will have to study to please them.”

“I shall try very hard to do it, then,” said Ellen, “and shall like it very much; all but leaving you and Merton! I have but one fear,—that I am not clever enough. Now, you, Annie, who know almost as much as papa, you will, I dare say, get a very good situation—or what shall I call it? rather, what does the world call it?”

“By the world I suppose you mean the ladies who engage governesses: if ostentatious, they call it an *appointment*, as if

you were a military officer ; if proud, a situation ; if vulgar *parvenus*, they will descend to the word place."

"Dear me ! How do you know all this, Annie ?"

"Oh, I have made very minute inquiries with regard to governessing," said Annie, "two or three years since, that I might be armed at all points; for I knew it would be our *kismet*, as Mussulmans say."

"And you never told me your expectations, Annie !"

"Told you, poor child ! Why should I ? Would you have me stop the glorious flight of yonder skylark, soaring sunward, with the suggestion that he had better moderate the merry strain he is pouring forth, as he is probably to fall by the sportsman's gun ?"

"Is it, then, so dreadful to be a governess !" exclaimed Ellen ; "are they all unhappy ?"

"From what I have heard, I believe them to be the most unhappy, ill-treated class in the world !" said Annie, with a heightened colour and a flashing light in her eye, which showed that she felt herself ill-treated by anticipation. "Bertha Somerton has writ-

ten me pages on the subject, though she is the most meek-spirited, uncomplaining creature living. In the three years she has been out, you don't know the strange things she has met with—the daily, hourly humiliations that——”

Here Annie stopped short, for Ellen looked positively frightened at the prospect before her, and she repented her own impetuosity.

“But if it is so dreadful, dear Annie, why should we try it? Why not attempt some humbler occupation, in which we should be less exposed to trial and insult?”

“Why, Ellen! because it is our *kismet*, as I told you before. We were born daughters of a scholar and a gentleman; the world would never forgive us should we descend in life—they will ascribe our course to vulgarity, if not to more perverted principles. We must suffer, to retain the world's good opinion. Ellen, dear, you have much to learn.”

“I know I have,” said Ellen, sighing; “but I hope you will find Bertha's account exaggerated: perhaps we shall be led by a kind Providence to those who will act towards us as Christians should. Of one

thing I am quite sure, your talents must command appreciation and respect."

"My talents!" exclaimed Annie; "my talents, Ellen! Yes, they will be appreciated, as your pretty face will be! You will see what both will produce. As I said before, dear one, I feel as if I could meet anything, like

‘The erring great and dimly wise.’

I can say, ‘Here’s a heart for every fate;’ but for you, darling—for you, who are so young, so delicate, timid, and inexperienced—for you I have a thousand trembling fears."

"But I have been thinking," said Ellen, musingly,—“I have been thinking how we are ever to set about this business. What is the first thing to be done? We have so few friends!"

"Few, indeed," said Annie. "None but our rustic neighbours; but it is better to be independent. We must repair to London the moment the sale is over, whatever it may cost us, Ellen, to leave our long-loved home, and our father’s grave,—indeed, all that is dear to us in life; the sooner the bitter cup is drained the better, the sooner

the bitterness will be passed. Cheer up, dear Ellen," continued the elder sister, bending fondly over and kissing her; "perhaps our prospects are brighter than I have anticipated."

"Yes, very likely we shall be happier than you think, Annie," replied Ellen, who was easily comforted; "and, after all, it is not wise to meet misfortunes half-way. Perhaps Bertha has been singularly unfortunate. I remember reading a tale once, in which the heroine was a governess, and she——"

"Married a duke, of course; well, we shall see. But now, Ellen, help me to sort these books, and make a list of them."

The sisters then busied themselves in arranging their father's modest library. While thus occupied, poor Ellen's tears flowed incessantly, but gently. Annie, too, wept; but she dashed away the drops as they gathered in her eyes, with a sort of stern stoicism, and resolutely continued her work. Annie Sherwood was formed with a strong, sinewy mind, but it was rather warped by the prejudices natural to one whose only acquaintance with the world was drawn from books; her feelings corresponded with the strength of her intellect,

but were liable to misdirection. Her love for Ellen was something approaching adoration—it was tender and protecting. She had never known what is called romantic passion, had never been ever so slightly tinged with love, and all the affections and feelings, which in a heart like hers would have been poured out as an offering to an idol (had she ever known one capable of inspiring her with a real passion), had been naturally centred in her lovely sister. But Annie wanted to know more of life, to know more of, and to distrust, her own strong will and masculine energies. Ellen—the gentle, yielding, loving Ellen, had the heart of a seraph, and looked up to her sister, as something more than mortal; nor had it ever occurred to her to contrast her own beauty with that sister's plainness. Never were sisters more united, heart and soul, but in one respect the elder was less happy than the other; she was a learned and skilful theologian, knew the Fathers well, and all the orthodox divines; she could have silenced a sceptic: Ellen knew nothing of the Fathers or theologians—would have stammered and become confused in an argument, but she was deeply religious.

The girls worked on in almost silence, unless now and then Ellen asked a question of her sister, with regard to the new and untried world on which they were about to enter. Neither of them had ever left Yorkshire in their lives, nor had they ever been in any of the large towns of that county; but Ellen took it for granted that Annie must know everything, and be able to answer satisfactorily whatever questions she might propose.

CHAPTER II.

THE auctioneer was an active man of business; the preparations for the sale were soon made, and the hitherto neat and picturesque Vicarage in two or three days presented as great a scene of desolation and change as an auctioneer's clerk could effect. About ten in the morning, the few respectable inhabitants (consisting principally of farmers, with a sprinkling of retired tradesmen) had assembled in the front of the house, on the small patch of grass by courtesy called a lawn, for the rooms were considered too small for the sale. The modest articles of furniture were brought out one by one, examined, and passed judgment on by the bystanders. The auctioneer read the conditions of sale, and, after a dry preparatory cough, proceeded to business. The sale went on pretty briskly, but it was observed that nearly all the lots were knocked down to one person, who, often bidding beyond the worth of his purchases, seemed determined to dis-

tance all competitors. He had already secured the complete furniture of the Vicar's little study, that of the parlour in which the sisters usually sat, and many other things, as well as all the books. Every one looked on with surprise, firstly because Mr. Turner was a young farmer just beginning life, with fair prospects indeed, but not such as to warrant any unnecessary expenditure; then, nearly all he had bought would be useless to him. What was he to do with a great stuffed easy-chair, fit for an invalid? What could he possibly want with a lady's work-table? Beyond all, what use could he make of a host of old Greek and Latin books? for, though educated to a certain extent, the young man was innocent of all classic attainment. He overheard some remarks passed on him; beyond all, he observed the satirical glances of his neighbours, but he took no notice of those glances, and went on bidding, only growing a little redder than nature had made him. Charles Turner was what is called in the world a fine young man, tall and well proportioned. His features were tolerably regular, his countenance honest and animated, but the sun had burnt a deep red into his cheeks—deep as the colour of the

peony ; and though he was very abstemious, and fought hard against the ruddy glow, it was all in vain, nothing would make him a shade paler. He had an excellent heart, good sense, and though rustic, was not vulgar. Then he had a dash of romance in his composition, which wonderfully softens down even the rustic, and was, besides, only five-and-twenty, and very much in love. The world could never have suspected Charles Turner of aspiring to one of the Vicar's daughters, but it was even so. The Sherwoods never kept themselves aloof from their neighbours, even from those who in point of education and refinement might have been considered their inferiors ; and the result was, that having been admitted to occasional intercourse with the Vicar's little circle, the young farmer had unconsciously lost his heart. At first he had loved hopelessly, and in something like awe of a woman whom he felt to be immeasurably his superior ; then he had not unreasonably argued that the devotedness of his attachment might well weigh against his seeming presumption ; finally, hope arose in his bosom, shadowy at first, but still it was hope, and that hope had grown into a palpable reality, and he was

actually making preparations for his unwooded bride in his modest dwelling. When the day's proceedings had quite closed, and while Annie and Ellen were sitting in the dismantled study, they received a visit from Mr. Turner. They were neither surprised nor offended, conjecturing that he had come with some good-natured offer of service; their greeting was consequently unusually cordial, and Mr. Turner, growing a few shades deeper coloured, sat down on one of his own purchases, but only just on the edge, and as if he were on the point momentarily of slipping off, while he played nervously with his hat, and wondered if he ever could summon courage to speak out! There was an embarrassed silence. At length Annie, the boldest of the party, broke it. "It was very kind in you to come and see us, Mr. Turner."

Mr. Turner still twisted the rim of his hat, much to its detriment, but made no other reply. "You were a large purchaser, to-day," continued Annie; "I scarcely know why, but it is a sort of satisfaction to me to feel that nearly all the things will be kept together."

Still the visitor spoke not. Annie made several efforts to introduce some subject which would set him at his ease, but it was ineffec-

tual. At last she began to fear that her poor father had been indebted to him in some way, and that the debt had escaped his memory. "I fear, Mr. Turner," said Annie, when she had fairly arrived at that disagreeable conclusion, "I fear that you have something to say that you hesitate to communicate?"

"Yes, yes, Miss Annie, that—that is it!" stammered Mr. Turner. "I—I—that is to say—can I speak to you alone, Miss Annie?"

"Certainly," said Annie. "Ellen dear, leave us."

Ellen left the room immediately, but on her exit, the young farmer was once more struck dumb. Again there was a long pause—again it was broken by Annie. "I see from your hesitation, Mr. Turner, that you fear to distress me by what you have to say. I partly guess its nature. If my dear father was indebted to you, as I strongly suspect, Ellen and I will gladly discharge whatever it may be."

These words had a magical effect on Charles Turner; he started from his chair, looked as proudly indignant as if he had been lord of the manor, and immediately found powers of articulation. "No, Miss Sherwood!" he exclaimed, "I had no

claims on your father, and if I had, how can you think I would choose this moment to press those claims on his orphan daughters?"

"Pray forgive me, Mr. Turner," said Annie; "misfortune is naturally timid and fearful, meeting difficulties half way; but I assure you I have been led into this mistake by your seeming reluctance to enter on the subject, when I understood you had something of importance to communicate."

"Yes, I have something of importance to say," said Mr. Turner, who had almost recovered his self-possession; "but I do not well know how to begin. I am grieved to see you and your sister leave Merton, after having been born in it, and known it as your home for so many years."

"Yes, indeed," said Annie, sighing, "it is grievous to part with Merton, and all its dear remembrances; but I do think that now we see the clear necessity of our leaving, we are prepared to bear the trial with becoming fortitude and resignation."

"But why should you leave, Miss Annie?" said Mr. Turner, drawing his chair a little closer to her.

"We have not the means of living here,"

said Annie, "and must not think of it. To remain independent, a life of courageous exertion is before us, and we prefer entering on it immediately, to putting off the evil day, and lingering in these dear scenes in useless idleness."

"Miss Annie!" said the young man, then paused, and looked at her very earnestly, as if to note how far he might venture to proceed: but he seemed to gather encouragement from her countenance, and continued, "I have been thinking of a plan, by which you might both remain at Merton."

"Have you?" said Annie; "you are very, very good."

"But will you consent?" he asked, eagerly.

"I should, you may be sure, consent to whatever would fulfil so dear a wish," said Annie, little suspecting what would follow; "but alas! I cannot hope for anything so happy, Mr. Turner."

"You must have thought it very strange to see me buy so much of your furniture; did you not, Miss Sherwood?"

"Yes, very strange," said Annie.

"And you could not guess the reason why?"

“No, indeed I could not.”

“It was—it was,” said the young man, “that you might have around you what you had been accustomed to—things which I knew you would like better than newer, finer furniture.”

“But I cannot see,” began Annie.

“Well, I will have them removed in a few days to the farm,” said Mr. Turner. “Everything shall be stood as nearly as possible as it has been here; the papering of the rooms is the same, and what I cannot do, Miss Ellen’s taste and yours will.”

“Ellen!” exclaimed Annie, growing alternately red and pale. “What can you mean?”

“I mean, that I hope you never will be separated,” said the young lover; “that you will both come to the home which awaits you! It is humble, but——”

“Mr. Turner!” exclaimed Annie, “do—do I understand you rightly? Do you wish to marry Ellen?”

“Ellen! I never dreamt of her!” exclaimed Mr. Turner; “but I——”

“What can you mean, then?”

“I mean, Miss Sherwood, that I have loved you long and well—presumptuously,

you may think, still I *have* loved you, and if——”

“You cannot mean this!” cried Annie, retreating a few paces.

“Why not, Miss Sherwood?”

“Because—because,” stammered Annie Sherwood; but she could proceed no further.

“Do you despise me, or my calling?”

“Neither,” said Annie, “but——”

“You will think of it, then,” he exclaimed; “you will not make a hasty decision; you will learn to love me a little—perhaps only a little; but I shall be satisfied with even that. I know I am unworthy of you; but you will one day be mine?”

“Oh, no! no! no! never—never! I cannot!”

“Never, Miss Sherwood!” cried the young man, changing colour.

“No, never! Mr. Turner,” repeated Annie. “What could have made you conceive such a thing?”

“Love!” replied he, “love!—such love as you may never know again, however much it may offend you now. It is your pride refuses me, Annie Sherwood—your pride, and not your heart. Mark me, you are going forth into the world; its pleasures

and flatteries may please you for a while, and teach you to think you have done well to trample on a heart like mine; but Annie, Annie Sherwood! the time will come when you will regret the humble love you now reject!" He turned and left the room. Annie gazed after him from the window, with mingled feelings of interest and curiosity. Hitherto she had considered Charles Turner a mere rustic, rather softened by education; she now saw him in a new light, a man of strong feeling, of noble pride and energy; one who, under different auspices, might have proved a man with whose destinies she need not have blushed to unite her own. She regretted that her refusal had not been more gently conveyed; she felt for her disinterested lover, sympathized with him as far as she could, but thought not for one moment of changing her mind. Busy cares of a very different nature ensued, and Annie dismissed her first offer of marriage from her mind much more readily and much sooner than most young ladies similarly circumstanced. The rejected swain spent a few hours in the depths of a wood, in whose shades he yielded alternately to fits of resentment and despondency. The next few days

he shut himself up in complete solitude, and neglected all his concerns ; but the ensuing market-day he knew the price of wheat and barley, like a sensible man as he was, and found hay fallen. On the evening of the same day, he remembered that in the burst of his resentment at Annie's proud rejection, he had ungenerously forgotten her position, and that of Ellen, and had neglected to make them any offers of neighbourly service. He resolved, therefore, on once more calling on the sisters, though far more with the idea of making up for his omission than of renewing his suit. He therefore presented himself at the Vicarage, but to his great disappointment, found that the Sherwoods had set off for London the previous day. He had, however, the satisfaction of receiving a very kind letter which Annie had left for him, softening her proud rejection, expressing such warm gratitude for his disinterested affection, and breathing such gentle wishes for his happiness and welfare, that his feelings were much soothed, and if his regret was not overcome, it was at least deprived of its worst bitterness. But Annie's letter contained no clue to her destination ; she merely said that she and Ellen were going to London, and that

was very vague information. Still, the young man could not help cherishing a lingering hope that, in some happy hour, he and Annie Sherwood would meet again. Perhaps meet when she had tried and been tried by the world, when she would have found its falsehood and vanity, and yearn for some really faithful heart on which to rest, some unselfish affection on which to repose, after having vainly sought for happiness among the more refined, but less honest, of the greater world. While thus musing and consoling himself, Charles Turner examined his sheep, and found them in a very flourishing condition.

CHAPTER III.

Poor Annie felt wearied, but she was too full of energy to yield to lassitude, and determined that what had to be done should be done at once. She therefore set off immediately to see Bertha Somerton, that she might learn from her what steps ought to be taken to procure "appointments," "engagements," or "places," for her sister and self.

Considering her country education, she was very little impressed by the princely dwellings which met her gaze in the fashionable Belgravia. Her mind was too familiar with descriptions of Eastern magnificence to be dazzled by the cold splendours before her, and she passed on, more intent on business than observation, till she reached No. — E—— Place, and inquired for Miss Somerton. A familiar-mannered footman, who probably measured her by her plain dress, replied, "I don't know whether you can see her. Here, you Charlie," he continued, turning his head over his shoulder to a

diminutive page, "run and tell Miss Somerton there's a young woman wants to see her;" then to Annie, "you'd better send word what your name is."

"Say that Miss Sherwood is here," said Annie, addressing herself to the page, who was already half-way up-stairs.

"A young woman of the name of Sherwood," repeated the footman.

Annie waited a few minutes in the hall, when the page returned with a slip of paper, on which was written, in pencil—

"Don't think me unkind, dear Annie, but though we have not met for so long, I dare not see you now. We are at lessons, and Mrs. Cheshyre is rather particular. I am afraid I shall not be free till Saturday afternoon; then I shall have a half-holiday, and will not fail to see you; and yet it seems a long time to wait when we——But stay, I think we can manage the affair; now I have a charming thought. Could you manage to meet me in the E—— Square Gardens to-morrow, *very, very* early? Do, if you can.

"Your affectionate Bertha."

Annie turned away, sad and disappointed, but she had a habit of commanding her

feelings, as well as her countenance, and betrayed little of what she thought. She read and re-read the note, reflected on its contents till she arrived at the conclusion that poor Bertha was, indeed, in bondage. Annie did not like the idea of a day spent in inactivity, and, consequently, lost. While thus ruminating, she wandered into humbler districts—one of those streets that grow up in fashionable neighbourhoods, as a connecting link between them and surrounding purlieus, like the would-be aristocrats that cling so tenaciously to the skirts of fashion, hoping to be confounded with it. In the street in question were many rather pretending-looking houses, but one end terminated in a row of mean shops. Annie's attention was attracted to one, in the window of which she saw "*The Times* lent to read." She went in, and paying the deposit, took the paper home with her.

"Have you seen Bertha?" was naturally Ellen's question.

"No," answered Annie, very reluctantly.

"I suppose she was out?"

Annie was strongly tempted to say "yes," but happily overcame the temptation, and replied "No, she was engaged."

“And would not see you?”

“We must remember her situation, Ellen; she could not see me; she is not her own mistress.”

“True,” said Ellen, sighing; “and if we should happen to be in the same street, I suppose we shall often have to say ‘engaged’ to one another.”

“We must first find the engagements,” said Annie. “Here, I have brought a newspaper full of advertisements; I must sit down and spell them out immediately, as it has to be returned in two hours.”

Annie read through the long columns of advertisements, finding very few from those requiring governesses. “Here is one!” she exclaimed, suddenly, “here is one, dear Ellen, that will exactly do for you, if we can get it. I like the style, it promises well, and it comes between two, in which the most exorbitant demands are made.” She then read aloud, “Wanted, in the family of a clergyman, a young lady, to undertake the entire care and education of three little girls, the eldest ten years of age. Music and French required, but the advertiser is chiefly desirous to obtain an instructress whose own early education and training

have been those of decided piety. The governess will be in every respect treated as a member of the family. Salary moderate. Address, Alpha, Symonds' Theological Library, T——."

"Shall I answer it?" said Annie. "There is nothing for me; nobody seems to want a boys' governess, and I can neither teach music nor languages."

"You know much more useful things, Annie."

"But nothing so ornamental, though," said Annie. "I have a great mind to begin; for music, it is too late, but I dare say I could master grammar. I was very silly not to learn when I could."

"You never did a silly thing, I am sure, Annie."

"Yes, indeed, I have done many, my dear child; but shall I write for you to these people?"

"If you please, dear," said Ellen, faintly.

Annie looked up; there were tears in Ellen's eyes; her own were growing very misty; but the letter must be written. So Annie wrote to the reverend inquirer, setting forth in earnest, intelligent language, all that was valuable in her dear Ellen, and

once more prepared to sally forth, for the purpose of posting her epistle.

“Let me go this time,” said Ellen.

“Oh no,” replied Annie, who could not bear the thought of sending her young sister (whose beauty she perhaps exaggerated) to wander forth alone in the streets of London.

On the following morning, Annie went to her appointment with Bertha. She found her walking with five children. The greeting between the friends was cordial, for they had been intimate from their childhood, till Bertha had left the neighbourhood of Merton to undertake the office of governess in the family of Colonel Cheshyre.

“Bertha, you are greatly altered!” was Annie’s involuntary exclamation on seeing her, for she well remembered that three years previously, Bertha had been a bright, vivacious-looking girl.

“Am I!” said the governess, faintly smiling. “More serious, perhaps, and a little grey—that’s all, I think; but, Annie, you shall not put me out of conceit with myself; I have a young and handsome admirer.”

“Have you?” said Annie, with interest; “I am glad to hear it, and hope, in your instance, that ‘the course of true love’ may

run smooth, and that your swain may soon induce you to leave——”

“Never!” said Bertha, colouring.

“Why?” said Annie.

“Because, Annie, I had the misfortune to be born a gentleman’s daughter,—because I am a woman of education,—and he——”

“Who is he?” asked Annie, anxiously.

“Who?” said the governess, looking down; then, after a pause, adding, “I am ashamed to tell you; but the ludicrous and humiliating mingle so closely, that while I blush at the remembrance, it produces a sort of sad meriment.”

“Who can it be?” said Annie; “some bookseller whose shop you frequent, I suppose?”

“Oh no; if it had been——”

“If it had been! Well, what then?”

“I should have accepted him.”

“You, Bertha!”

“Yes, to escape my present life!”

“Are you, then, so wretched?”

Bertha’s lips quivered, and her eyes filled with tears, as she replied, “I am wrong, perhaps, to say so, very wrong, for I am better off than many similarly situated. Mrs. Cheshyre is amiable, very amiable; she

is particular about the children, anxious they should improve; you would call her fidgety, but I don't think her wrong; only she is one of a proud family, and often unintentionally, for I think she would not be wilfully unkind, hurts one's feelings. She evidently thinks teachers are quite a distinct race, and have no sensibility."

"But who is your lover, Bertha?"

"Who?" repeated Bertha.

"Why, it must be some one very terrible; I see you are ashamed to tell me, so to encourage your confidence, you shall have mine. Yes, mine! for I, too, have just received a brilliant offer of marriage. You remember Charles Turner, the farmer?"

"Yes, perfectly well."

"You know he is what they term comfortably off, has a well-stocked farm, and cultivates peonies in his cheeks and garden; well, it was from him."

"And you have refused him, Annie?"

"Of course. I might barter my independence for the heart of a man whose mind and breeding were——"

"And you have refused him!—refused Charles Turner!" interrupted Bertha.

"Certainly; was I wrong?"

“Yes ; I think it was madness.”

“In what sense ?”

“Yes ; madness, dear Annie,” repeated Bertha ; “forgive my saying so, to choose a life of dependence and toil, when you might have been the happy wife of an honest man, against whom you can bring no worse reproach than red cheeks.”

“And vulgarity,” said Annie.

“No, pardon me,” replied Bertha, “not vulgarity, but, if you will, rusticity. Annie, Annie, your pride, not your heart, refuses him.”

“Strange : that is exactly what he said when he left me,” said Annie. “But yet it not quite true, or at least if it were pride, the heart had some share in it. Had he been the most polished man in the world, I should have done the same, unless I loved him. I could not marry merely to be provided for. But would you have accepted him yourself ?”

“Frankly, yes,” answered Bertha, “if he had chosen me. But this is foolish talking now.”

“But to return to the starting-point ; who is your Leander ? You still hesitate : I shall begin to fancy it is the footman !”

“You have guessed rightly; the footman who opened the door for you yesterday!”

“What could have induced such impertinence?” exclaimed Annie, indignantly.

“I do not give it that name,” said Bertha, dejectedly. “I think it was all very natural: the man saw me day after day at the table with the nurse, in fact, quite on the footing of an upper servant: he thought me suitable.”

“Why do you stay in such a house, Bertha?”

“To tell you the truth, though I am not yet old,” said Bertha, “I have survived my energies, and feel apprehensive of a change bringing with it worse, because unknown evils; but, Annie, earthly life is not immortal!”

“My poor, dear Bertha!” exclaimed Annie. “And you still think the woman who subjects you to such insults not wilfully unkind!”

“No, indeed she is not,” said Bertha; “but she has been taught in that school which confines the privileges of society to elegant doers of nothing; she belongs to the class, in fact, who suppose good breeding

and honest industry incompatible!! She means to be kind, nevertheless, and I am sure she thinks she makes me very happy; but were I to complain to any one of the thousand and one humiliations each day brings me, she would treat the idea as an emanation of morbid sensibility."

"Would she not let you come to meet us, as you proposed?"

"To speak truly, I did not venture to ask permission when the time came; Mrs. Cheshyre would have thought it very improper, for she has several times refused to let me spend an hour or two, when my day's labour was over, with a French girl, who lives near us in E—— Place, though she frequently sends me to execute commissions for herself quite late in the evening. But come and see me on Saturday, Annie, and you will judge better of my position, and what your own is likely to be."

Bertha then gave Annie some instructions as to the course she was to pursue, and a variety of addresses of different scholastic agents, who found engagements for governesses at a certain per-centage. Poor Annie remarked, with a simplicity which would have done honour to Ellen herself, that she

felt pretty secure, she scarcely knew why, but still she did so, that her sister would obtain the situation for which she had applied. She was considerably mortified on hearing that the advertisement in question might have produced a hundred applications, and hers perchance be overlooked in the number; it had never occurred to Annie that many others might be entertaining equal hopes with herself at the same moment, on the very same subject. Bertha smiled at her clever friend's *naïveté*, and was about to explain some more of the arcana of her profession, when a coarse, vulgar-looking woman burst on them from the other side of the gardens, exclaiming—

“ Well, Miss Somerton! if this don't beat all! I'm to toil for ever for the young ladies and gentlemen's '*ealth* an' comfort, while you're *lettin'* them run wild *catchin'* their death, untyin' their '*ats* an' bonnets an' takin' them off, and you takin' no more notice than if they was nobody's children. But no wonder, you're always pickin' up all sorts of acquaintance, instead of keepin' yourself respectable!”

Bertha made no reply, but looked quite sick and faint. She was good, but feeble in

many ways, having none of what the world calls spirit.

“Bertha! Bertha!” exclaimed Annie, “don’t give in to that woman’s insolence!”

“What can I do?” said Bertha, dejectedly; “Mrs. Cheshyre values her highly for her extreme care of the children’s health and dress. She sends all her directions to me through her, and indeed I have been her subordinate from the first, nor can anything be done to produce a better state of things.”

“Then you should leave,” said Annie.

“Where could I go? I have no one to recommend me to another situation, and if I gave warning, Mrs. Cheshyre would never give me a testimonial!”

“But still I would leave, if I went to the workhouse!”

“And my mother! what would become of her?”

Bertha’s mother entirely depended on her for support.

CHAPTER IV.

It was with a heavy heart that poor Annie Sherwood returned to her sister, and set out with her to call on a scholastic agent, who bore a high-sounding French name, which induced them to expect something very imposing. On arriving at T—— Street, they found that they must wait some considerable time before being admitted to the presence of the great man. While they remained in an outer room, awaiting his pleasure, seven or eight young, and three or four elderly women passed out, each of whom had probably received the assurance that she would be immediately *placée*; but as some of them had heard the same story every day for the last four or five months, they were strangely incredulous, and wondered at their companions' ready trust. At length it was Annie's turn to be admitted; she entered, followed by Ellen, who was trembling, at once with hope and fear.

Mr. de F—— was a fat little man, sly

and avid in his looks, with a business-like air, which he mistook for dignity and intelligence. He waved his hand as a sign that the sisters were to be seated, then began the usual questioning, brief, dry, and systematic. Quickly he ran through his list of interrogatories, and as he received each answer, entered it in a large book. Annie's list of qualifications ran thus—"Age, twenty-four; appearance, lady-like. *Short!* General education—History, Geography, Arithmetic good, Latin good, Greek good; not out before. Salary——" "What do you want?" asked the great man. Annie did not know what to ask. "Twenty," said the great man. "You have no accomplishments; I shall put down twenty guineas; I suppose you will not refuse eighteen. I have no doubt of placing you, Madam, in a week or two."

There was a lie in the man's very smile: he turned with a softer air to Ellen.

Ellen made out a much more brilliant list of accomplishments than Annie, being able to put in "good Music, good French, rudiments of Italian, and *Tall.*" So the great man paid her a running compliment on her good looks, which brought the blood to her

cheeks, and triumphantly put her down at thirty guineas per year, hinting, however, that as she was very young, she had better enter herself at twenty-one years of age. "Oh no!" exclaimed both the girls, who did not yet know enough of life to lie with effrontery. The great man smiled pityingly at their ignorant simplicity, and entered Ellen, without further consulting her, at three years older than her real age. He then asked for references. The candidates had none to give. "Awkward business, never having been out before," muttered the great man, "but you must name some friend."

Annie could think of no one to whom she could apply, or to whom she would like to apply, for a reference: at last she fixed on an amiable old maid, who lived not very far from Merton, and whom she felt sure she might take the liberty of naming, without a previous and formal application for permission. Miss Brentford's name was accordingly entered as a reference; the great man rang the bell to admit fresh applicants, and nodding his head, as a sign for the Sherwoods to withdraw, assured them again that they would immediately find employment, and then became suddenly immersed in a pile

of letters before him, and apparently quite unconscious of their presence.

“How fortunate that we came here,” said Ellen, “how very fortunate!”

“Why, dear?” said Annie, quietly.

“Why, because Mr. de F—— promises us to be so soon *placées*.”

“And do you believe him?”

“Why should we doubt him, Annie?”

“Because while his lips made the promise, his countenance told another tale. I believe his face, not his words.”

Ellen sighed, and looked so disappointed that Annie could say no more. The sisters next proceeded to —— Street, in which they had been informed that an institution of a benevolent character existed, which undertook to provide governesses with engagements, free of all charge; that of course would be a great advantage, and the institution bore so high a character, that Anne hoped almost as much as Ellen, in crossing the threshold of a house dedicated to benevolence and philanthropy.

The sisters entered a spacious hall, in which stood a page, who directed them to enter their names in a large office-looking registry. He then flung open the door of

an apartment, and loudly announced "Miss Sherwood; Miss Ellen Sherwood."

They entered. Seated at a long table, something like that in a mess-room, were twenty-four or five governesses, or rather candidates for the office, bending over some written books; several more were sitting in a stiff row against the wall. A grave-looking secretary presided at the table, who conversed amiably with each applicant in succession, and made notes in an open book before him. Annie, who was perfectly ignorant of the rules of the establishment, and unwilling to interrupt the secretary, who seemed deeply engaged, ventured to seat herself at the table, and inquire of her next neighbour, a smiling, vivacious-looking girl of seventeen, what the book before her contained.

"The addresses of ladies wanting governesses," she replied, "with a list of their requirements. Will you look over me? Do you want a 'daily?' I am looking out for one. But there are so many governesses. I think there are thirty-three here to-day: sometimes there are many more. I have been six months on the books. Can you speak German? It's no use coming here if

you can't. People don't care at all whether you know history or geography, or anything of that sort, but always begin, 'Can you speak German?' 'Have you been out before?' 'Do you like teaching?' "

Thus the young girl ran on, till the grave secretary looked up at the unwonted interruption, and she bent blushing over the book.

The secretary was a mild, benevolent-looking man, but he was only the secretary, and had nothing to do with the regulations of the Society. Annie was looking over her young neighbour's shoulder for some time, but saw nothing very promising in the book. There were several vacancies in schools for teachers, but the "principals" generally required *everything* to be taught for *nothing*; that is, for board and washing, or for a stipend so shamefully low, that it did not merit the name of salary. Some engagements in families, too, were open, but the requirements were so numerous, that they filled Annie with dismay. One in particular struck her eye: "The Countess of D—— requires a governess, who must be capable of instructing her pupils in all the usual branches of education, with music, singing,

drawing, German, Italian, and French, without the assistance of masters." Several other particulars of the engagement were mentioned, and the notice closed with "*salary, 30*l*!*"

"What!" thought Annie, "are all these accomplishments to be bartered for thirty pounds a-year! What salary can I expect!"

Just then, the grave secretary dismissed the lady with whom he had been conversing, and looked inquiringly at Annie.

"Have you been long on the books?" whispered her talkative neighbour; "I really don't think I have seen you before."

"I entered my name as I came in, in the hall," said Annie.

"Is that all? oh, that won't do at all; there is a great deal more to be done before you are privileged to take addresses. You must—but the secretary is motioning to you: go to him; he will tell you all about it."

Annie was almost always self-possessed, as a gentlewoman should be; and the secretary, though he bore a serious, thoughtful countenance, looked kind and encouraging. She began by apologizing for the liberty she had taken in looking over the books

without having previously fulfilled the conditions of entrance.

“Never mind,” said the secretary, “if you have not taken any addresses.”

“I have not taken any,” said Annie, quickly.

“Have you seen nothing which suits you?”

“Nothing,” said Annie; “to speak frankly, I thought the ladies who had made entries of their requirements, had been confusing the teacher’s remuneration with the suitable wages of footmen and housemaids.”

The secretary sighed; he seemed to think so too: perhaps he had daughters, governesses.

“Of course you are aware that this is a benevolent institution,” said he; “perhaps the philanthropic intentions of its supporters are not always seconded by those who apply here for their—”

“Their servants,” said Annie, bitterly.

“My good young lady,” said the secretary, in an under tone, “I see you are beginning your profession. Take a word of advice from one tried in the world’s ways: do not add a sharper point to life’s thorns by always contemplating them; believe me, they may be blunted to a certain extent by reason and philosophy.”

He then kindly explained the rules of the institution, which were such as Annie could not comply with, two recommendatory letters being required—one from the family with whom she had last resided. She thought—indeed, felt sure—that she knew no one to whom she could apply, excepting Miss Brentford, and her single testimonial would not be sufficient; besides, Miss Brentford lived in lodgings, and the secretary had expressly told her, and showed her in the printed prospectus, that the referees must be housekeepers. They were not to be relations; they were not to be in any way connected with scholastic pursuits; so it was quite useless to apply to an old gentleman who was a distant relation of her mother's—equally hopeless to think of a lady with whom the girls had been at school some years previously. Nothing could be done; Annie thanked the secretary for the information he had given her, as well as for his good advice, and was withdrawing.

“You will return when you have procured testimonials?” said the secretary.

“Thank you,” said Annie; “I fear it would be useless; I cannot fulfil the conditions; besides, I have no accomplishments.”

As she was leaving the room, the talkative girl whispered—

“Pray wait for me outside; I won’t be long; I have something to tell you.”

Annie complied with her request. When she joined them, it was with the familiarity of an old acquaintance.

“Here,” said she, pushing a paper into Annie’s hands; “I heard all that cross old ‘scaramouch’ said to you, but I was determined that you should have some addresses, so I’ve copied out three for you.”

“You are very kind, very kind indeed,” said Annie, “but I should not like to use them.”

“Oh no, it would not be right,” interposed Ellen.

“Not right! what wrong could there be in it?” exclaimed their new acquaintance. “Dear me, where did you come from?”

“From Yorkshire,” said Ellen, innocently.

“So I should think. Well, really, you had better go back there again, for I can tell you plainly, you’ll never do any good for yourselves in this world. Now I, that am younger than either of you (I was only seventeen last June), know how to go to

work. You'll never get engagements—I know you wont."

"I would rather go without than do anything dishonourable," said Annie.

"Or wrong," added Ellen; "we could not expect a blessing on our endeavours if we—"

A ringing laugh from their companion interrupted the sentence, though they were in the street. Annie began to wish she could shake off her companion. She tried to effect her object several times, but unsuccessfully. The girl talked on with the greatest volubility—one moment inculcating worldly maxims which assorted ill with her youth and buoyant spirits; the next, rattling on like a wild child, asking their Christian names, &c.; then giving them her own family history, that of all her brothers and sisters, uncles, aunts, and cousins, of her friends and acquaintance in general, her flirts and her lovers, her rivals and enemies, the persons on whom she doted, those whom she hated, &c. When at last the flow of words seemed nearly exhausted, she informed her hearers that she was just going to a Mrs. Piscator, a scholastic agent, who was considered one of the best in London, and remarkably successful in placing

her clients. She advised the sisters to accompany her, which Annie, observing that the young lady was considerably sobered, agreed to do. The trio proceeded with all haste to G—— Street, where they entered a rather large and dismal house, and were shown into a remarkably dirty room, in which, as is usual, sat a number of careworn governesses, who were waiting to be admitted to Mrs. Piscator's presence.

A girl of about eighteen, with no manners, and evidently as little education, very tawdrily dressed, and with her hair curled in a crop, was talking very volubly of her "*Ma*," Mrs. Piscator, and her large connexion with the aristocracy, the number of ladies who called on her "*Ma*" in their own carriages, &c. Then Miss Piscator (who, by the way, had very weak eyes, with a red circle round them) opened a running fire on all the rival agents, and gave various anecdotes of governesses who had cheated her "*Ma*," and shown themselves ungrateful for all her kindness; of others, who had stolen the addresses of families "*en recherche*," to sell them; winding up everything with her "*Ma's*" wonderful success. Miss Piscator was an excellent specimen of talkative vul-

garity; every unfortunate “h” in her declamation was “driven from house, from home, from hope, from heaven.”

Ellen turned away with disgust and pity, thinking it quite useless to attempt seeking engagements through such vulgar people. Annie, on the contrary, listened with a smile which Miss Piscator took for admiration, and recommenced her harangue.

In one corner sat a pale-faced widow, of about six-and-thirty. She had vainly tried to put in a word. At last she contrived to arrest the attention of the loquacious young lady, and falteringly inquired whether there was any prospect of a daily engagement for her?

“You’ve been answered already on that subject, Mrs. Stuart,” said Miss Piscator, with a toss of the head. “There’s none to be ’ad, and I’m sure Ma ’as business enough on ’er ’ands, without undertaking ’opeless concerns. You’ve been very much to blame—very much indeed—in not taking the excellent situation Ma offered you; you may never ’ave such another chance!”

“It was so far from London, Miss Piscator,” pleaded the widow.

“Only in Derby, Mrs. Stuart. What ’ave you to answer?”

“I have three young children entirely dependent on me for support,” said the widow, with emotion; “if I went into a family, what would become of them?”

“You could put them out to nurse.”

“To nurse! put them out to nurse with a salary of 30*l.* a year!” ejaculated the widow, in a tone of the utmost agitation.

Miss Piscator said something about mismanagement, and asked the widow if she had not grown-up sons?

“I have two sons, mere youths,” she replied.

“And why can’t they take charge of them?”

“Take charge of the little ones!” repeated the poor widow; “the eldest is but seventeen, and both are writers in a commercial house.”

“Then why can’t they ’elp you out of their salary?”

“One has no salary but his board; the other, 15*l.* a year!”

“Well, it’s no use talking, Mrs. Stuart,” said the young lady, in the most shrewish voice; “if you wont ’ave what we can offer, you need not come and trouble Ma any more.”

The widow murmured something about her entrance money.

“Oh, that paltry five shillings! Return it, indeed! No; instead of that, you should give another ten, for all the trouble you’ve given us.”

The widow looked up despairingly; there was a world of misery in her sunken eye; her pale cheek told a tale of penury and privation. Reader! that five shillings was more to her than fifty times the sum might be to you or me! Her thin lips quivered; her attenuated, scantily-clad form trembled; but she lowered her rusty crape veil, and, with a depressed head and drooping gait, slowly left the room. She paused an instant in the passage to wipe away her tears, and as she there stood, she was conscious that some one had followed her with gentle, noiseless steps. A hand was laid softly on her arm, and a sweet voice whispered, “Don’t be offended, pray don’t; I would not hurt your feelings for the world; but do take this for your little children.”

The widow felt two coins forced into her hand. She looked in bewildered surprise at the bright yellow sovereigns, then at the giver.

“Who are you?” she ejaculated.

“A poor governess,” replied Annie Sherwood, “but richer than you; rich enough,” she added, “to afford myself this little luxury of helping the orphans.”

“God bless and help you in your own hour of need,” said the widow, grasping Annie’s hand. “God will reward you, if I cannot,” she faltered; but Annie had already disappeared.

On her re-entering the waiting-room, Miss Piscator directed the whole of her attention to her, and, remarking that Mrs. Stuart was a poor, weak-minded woman, immediately began plying Annie with questions as to her own acquirements, and informed her of the regulations of what she was pleased to call her “Ma’s institution.”

Annie was informed that she and her sister must begin by paying five shillings each as entrance fee, and giving severally a dozen postage stamps.

“I have no objections to the latter,” said Annie; “but with regard to the entrance fee, I should prefer giving it when the engagement is procured, with the usual per centage.”

“We can’t alter our regulations in your

favour, Miss Sherwood," said Miss Piscator, with dignity, or something meant for it.

"Dear Annie, let us give it if it is customary," whispered Ellen.

"No," said Annie, firmly, "it is not fair and just." Then turning to Miss Piscator, she added, "I am going to enter my name, and that of my sister, at a number of agencies. Should each demand five shillings, the entrance fees would amount to a considerable sum. No, I cannot pay on an uncertainty; when we have engagements, we shall immediately discharge our debts to the provider."

Miss Piscator said no more. She raised her eyebrows, bit her lips, and finally left the room to consult with her "Ma" on the propriety of ejecting the contumacious clients, for Mrs. Piscator was wont to rule as a sovereign in her little court.

When the young lady had withdrawn, the numerous candidates for engagements began to talk pretty freely among themselves. If any two sets of people resemble each other, it is the boarders of a convent, escaped from the eye of their superior for a brief space, and a number of governesses off duty! Some of the ladies discussed the Piscator family, relating various anecdotes of their exactions

and pretensions ; others talked of the numerous agencies, and their comparative demerits, as well as those of “ The Union,” as the institution in —— Street is called.

Some enlarged on the miseries of governess life ; a few, whose experience had been more fortunate than that of the others, ventured to assert that all governesses were not wretched—that some were treated with kindness and consideration ; but the few who made these remarks, were borne down by the rest of the sisterhood, who appeared to regard them as secretly leagued with the oppressors ; and it was finally carried, by a very large majority, that the life of a governess is the most miserable on earth, after that of a slave in a West Indian sugar plantation. So the moderate ladies were reduced to silence !

The greater number of governesses present were daughters of London tradesmen, well educated, and, in many ways, more efficient teachers than the few decayed gentlewomen, daughters of officers and clergymen, who were mingled with them ; but they were usually underbred, and had an air of *mauvais ton* and *gaucherie*. There was a fat, red-faced little woman, with a very decided look

about her pursed-up mouth, who talked in a loud, rough voice, and a vulgar tone, though her grammar was irreproachably correct; her conversation was entirely confined to the experience of her own life. One lady, in whose family she had resided some time, had dismissed her from the simple fact of her having said one day, "Ma'am, I must have (I really require it to support me)—I must have a glass of Bass's pale ale at eleven every day!" "So she answered," continued the little woman, "that if that was the case, my health must be delicate, and I must leave; but I have always commanded a good salary, and no doubt I always shall!" The fat lady (who was the daughter of an *Italian warehouseman*) was then summoned to an audience with Mrs. Piscator.

"That woman will be *placée* before anyone in this room!" said a surly voice. It came from a crabbed-looking old maid, who had been a governess thirty years. She then relapsed into silence. Her prophecy came true—the fat lady was the first provided for. Impudence and confidence go a long way!

Annie Sherwood and her sister were completely disgusted with their sisterhood, and mentally remarked, that if all teachers resem-

bled the specimens before them, it was not very wonderful that the governess should be generally condemned to the solitude of the school-room; for who could associate with such companions? They had yet to learn the fact, that ladies prefer as inmates those who are mere useful machines for the conveyance of necessary knowledge, and who, having no pretensions to elegance or refinement, are less likely to exercise any unwelcome influence in the way of rivalry. Besides, ladies argue, and perhaps they are right, that it is easier to keep down the ambition of a plebeian than to discountenance the assumption of equality, in those who feel themselves worthy of consideration. The plebeians have far less to complain of than the more refined.

Miss Piscator now entered with a very bland smile, to say that her "Ma" would be glad to see Miss Sherwood and her sister. They were accordingly ushered into the sanctum of the doubly great woman. There was something very maternal and encouraging in Mrs. Piscator's countenance, Ellen thought, and she looked up in her face with her bright eyes and smiled hopefully. There was something very hypocritical in her little

twinkling grey eye, thought Annie, who looked straightforward and piercingly at her, till Mrs. Piscator looked the other way, and turning to Ellen said, *sotto voce*, "Sit down, love," and began to play with her numerous letters. Mrs. Piscator was a short, stout, red-faced, vulgar woman, with a countenance indicative of cunning, and the grossest sensuality. She was extravagantly dressed—satin, blonde, and artificial flowers; she considered herself very imposing.

For a few moments the searching eye of Annie had discomposed Mrs. Piscator, but she soon recovered, and opened proceedings with a rushing cataract of words, informing her hearers, *à priori*, of her family history, that of her "Pa," and of her husband. Then came an account of the great and noble families who honoured her with their patronage—of the immense extent of her connexion—of the number of governesses she had placed within the year, &c.—of the great things she meant to do; and as Mrs. Piscator always said "love," or "dear," or "dearest," every five minutes, Ellen thought her very kind, and Annie thought her more hypocritical.

At length she stopped to make inquiries

of Annie and Ellen, noted down the information they gave her, shaking hands very cordially and affectionately with each, and adding a few more "loves" and "dears," she dismissed them.

On the whole, Mrs. Piscator did not speak so badly as her daughter, and had she contented herself with fewer words, and not over-acted her part, she might have passed for a respectable, well-intentioned woman: as it was, she made so many demonstrations of an impossible degree of disinterestedness, of such entire self-renunciation, such perfect devotion to the interests of her clients, that she clearly showed she thought solely of her own, and only succeeded in imposing on the inexperienced.

Mrs. Piscator assured the new candidates that they would soon, very soon, find engagements under her auspices.

"I am glad we came," said Ellen, looking quite bright and joyous.

"Poor child!" ejaculated Annie; "do you know whom you remind me of, Ellen?"

"No, indeed."

"The Vicar of Wakefield's wife, when she tells him, 'between ourselves, we have made an excellent day's work of it!' 'Pretty

well,' said the vicar. 'What! only pretty well!' returned she; 'I think it is very well.' Oh, Ellen, Ellen! as the good vicar said, 'May we both be the better of it at the end of three months!' "

CHAPTER V.

MANY a long, weary walk had those two poor girls. Frequently were they summoned to a distance of several miles twice in one day, and those journeys were usually performed on foot, as with daily diminishing means, they were unable to meet the expense of coach hire. Sometimes their hopes were raised by seeming success, which ended in abrupt disappointment. How often they were summoned to Mrs. Piscator's, or Mr. de F——'s, to meet parties who never arrived, or with whom they found it impossible to come to terms, when they did arrive! Mrs. Piscator's notes were always thus concluded, "Yours affectionately." Mr. de F——'s were more business-like.

A month, a whole month, had slipped away in useless researches and fruitless negotiations. Annie's want of accomplishments precluded her finding an engagement, while the youth and beauty of Ellen almost invariably stood in her light; besides, neither of

them had experience. How many hours were spent in consultation, what were they to do?

“We must be less particular,” said Ellen; “we must take what we can get.”

“But we have refused nothing,” said Annie; “it is we who are constantly refused.”

While they were thus discussing, a letter, in an unknown hand, arrived; it was not from an agent; who else could write to those two friendless girls? To their infinite surprise, they found it to be a reply to the application they had made (in answer to the advertisement for a governess in a clergyman’s family) long before, in fact, so long before that they had forgotten the circumstances.

Even Annie was delighted, as she bent eagerly over the letter with her sister, and perused its pleasing contents. It was from the Rev. —— himself: his wife was an invalid, and had deputed him to write for her. Nothing could be more agreeable and amiable than the tenor of the epistle; it consisted of three closely-filled sheets, containing not one word to which the most fastidious could object. “What a nice, kind letter! How glad I am that he has written,” exclaimed

Ellen ; “ this will exactly suit me. I am sure I need not seek further. I like what Mr. Clifton says about helping in the Sunday-school so much, Annie.” Then Ellen’s radiant face fell a little as she added, “ But you, dear, what will you do? How can I bear to leave you alone !”

“ Oh, I shall do very well,” said Annie, gaily ; “ if this affair is all it promises to be, you must certainly accept the comfortable home it will give, and if my resources fail before I am provided for, you can help me out of your salary till I, too, am *placée*. The stipend will most likely be liberal, as they seem rich people ; for I observe Mr. Clifton keeps a carriage, as he says, in the event of your going to them, the servants shall meet you with the carriage at the station ; though why he should advert to the subject just at the opening of the negotiation, I cannot think, unless it be to awe you with their grandeur.”

“ No, I dare say it was not for that,” said Ellen, “ all the rest of his letter is so sensible and pious ; I cannot help thinking well of Mr. Clifton.”

“ Well, perhaps you are right,” said Annie ; “ but I must really finish putting your

clothes in order, if you are to go to these people."

The sisters began to work with the alacrity which renovated hope inspired, and as they worked they talked of their plans and prospects; and despite her habitual mood, Annie shared her sister's elation at the idea of a happy home in a pleasant vicarage, which would remind her perchance of their own dear home at Merton. At length Annie started up. "I must go and see Bertha, to show her this letter."

"Do," said Ellen; "I would go too, only Bertha says it is not the thing for a governess to receive two visitors at a time; she has been reprimanded for it. When you return, Annie, you will tell me what I had better say to Mr. Clifton."

Annie went out more cheerfully than usual, and proceeded at a brisk pace to E—— Place, where she was admitted for the first time to see Bertha. She had not previously the least idea of her friend's *locale* in the house. The saucy footman (now the object of Annie's detestation), who admitted her, directed her to walk up-stairs till she reached the top of the house, when she could not fail to find the governess's rooms.

Annie accordingly began her ascent, but ere she had reached half-way up the stone staircase, she had to stop for want of breath, and to lean against the wall for rest. At length, however, she reached the summit, and stood before an open door; she heard Bertha's voice, speaking, as she thought, to another person, and she hesitated for a moment to advance: but she was mistaken; it might have been from want of other company, but Bertha was talking to herself. The words that had reached Annie were "Very, very lonely!" And no doubt the poor governess was lonely in that dingy back room, at the very top of the house, hour after hour, in the dreary evenings, with no companionship but her own sad thoughts and memories. "Oh, Bertha, this is killing work!" said Annie, sinking into a chair, breathless.

"What is killing work?" asked Bertha. "Do you mean the staircase? Oh I am so sorry you are tired."

"Tired, no, I am not tired," said Annie; "I was thinking of you, Bertha. It is killing work to go up and down that staircase."

"Not to me," said Bertha; "you feel

it, because it is new to you. I have been accustomed to it for years; besides, I don't try it often, only twice a day, when I take the children for their walks."

"And the rest of the time?"

"I live up here."

"Always up here? Always alone?"

"Always up here, but not always alone. I wish it were so! but as it is, I have not only the four children, but the nurse with me, till seven o'clock. Then the children go to bed, and the nurse repairs to the housekeeper's room; the remaining hours I am alone."

"Do you read much?"

"No, I have no time; I make all the children wear, except their hats and shoes."

"Shameful," said Annie, colouring with indignation; "and oh, to think that such a life is before poor Ellen!"

Bertha sighed, but could say nothing. The poor pale-faced governess! She had toiled all day with unruly children, been domineered over by the nurse, who had been from the first her superior in authority, and had treated her with all the insolence which a vulgar-minded being, raised above herself, could devise. And now the poor

girl sat, with weary, throbbing temples, and dimmed eyes, making tunics for the little boys, who were taught by their ignorant guide, to treat her with the most insufferable disrespect. We have had our Hood standing forth (and honour be to his noble memory for the deed) as the champion of the oppressed sempstress; yes, we have had our "Song of the Shirt," echoing through the length and breadth of the land; shall we have no courageous defenders of the more *oppressed, yes, the more oppressed* governess? No poet to enlist the sympathies of the benevolent in their cause, nor to awaken the blush of shame on the cheek of their oppressors, "on whose side is power!"

Poor Bertha Somerton! hers was a sad, sad life, but she was very meek and uncomplaining, and always said, with an attempt at a smile, that she was more fortunate than many: perhaps she was; at least she tried to think so.

Annie unfolded her pocket-book, and read the letter she had received from the clergyman who seemed desirous of securing the services of Ellen as a governess. Bertha read it slowly after Annie had finished, then

shook her head. "You don't like it, Bertha?" said Annie, looking sadly disappointed.

"No, dear, not quite," said Bertha; "but don't look so sad about it."

"I can't help it!" said Annie. "You know I have usually plenty of courage, but I shall droop if this good situation is lost to poor Ellen. What do you dislike in the letter?"

"It promises too much," said Bertha.

"Is that all?"

"Yes; but that is enough; depend upon it, whenever you hear that you are to be treated as one of the family, you will find yourself rather worse off than the housemaid. Whenever you are told of tractable, amiable children, you may be sure that they are as unmanageable as——"

"As the tigers of a ménagerie, I suppose," said Annie. "Yes, I can understand all that."

"And besides," said Bertha, "you will always find you are engaged for a less number of children than you have really to teach. In every way, the description of the coming engagement always reads better in a letter, than it looks in reality."

Annie returned to her sister, unwilling

to damp her hopes, yet feeling her own considerably depressed by her extended knowledge of the world. The following morning there came a letter from dear Mrs. Piscator, requesting Annie and Ellen to call on her at eleven that day, as she had met with an engagement exactly suited to Ellen; a most excellent "appointment," only one pupil, few requirements, and a salary of seventy guineas! Unheard-of liberality! "Oh, this is too good to be true!" exclaimed both the candidates. "Nevertheless, we must go and see about it," said Annie.

Another of those killing, long walks, and the poor girls found themselves, worn and weary, seated in Mrs. Piscator's waiting-room, where they remained, till two hours later than the time which she had appointed for their reception. Meanwhile they had to listen, or seem to listen, to the oft-repeated and inflated accounts given by Miss Piscator of her "*Ma's*" extensive connexion with the nobility, &c. At length the lady made her appearance, very elaborately dressed in tawdry finery. Instead of having been closeted with her clients as she professed, she had evidently only just breakfasted, as some

crumbs of buttered toast adhering to her lips and chin plainly testified. Opening her harangue with the usual amount of “loves” and “dears,” the lady set forth in bold *alto-relievo* the service she was about to render her dear young friend, by placing her in such a distinguished family, for Mr. St. John was not only a Member of Parliament, but also of noble, very noble family, being the third cousin of the Viscount L——, so very well known in the sporting world, &c. Her oration finished, Mrs. Piscator handed her clients the address of the St. John family, and dismissed them with as many protestations of sympathy and affection as she could crowd into a limited space of time. The Sherwoods were astonished that no further reference had been made to the entrance-fee; but their surprise ceased when they heard the dulcet tones of Mrs. Piscator’s voice pursuing them—“Miss Sherwood! Miss Sherwood! you’ve forgotten your entrance-fee, love! It’s a mere matter of form, you know; but I must not make a difference in your favour, or my other young friends might feel hurt, love!”

“You shall have our entrance-fees with

the per-centage when we are provided with engagements, Mrs. Piscator," said Annie, resolutely.

"Ah, that's very naughty, love! very naughty indeed!" said Mrs. Piscator, with a slight change of voice. "You really must not take advantage of my indulgent kindness, dear."

"I cannot afford to pay anything on an uncertainty," said Annie, quite decidedly; "but you may rely on my honourably discharging your demands the moment the fitting time arrives."

"But you forget, love," said Mrs. Piscator, "that all this time you are taking the chances which I ought to give to my regular young friends!"

"I wish to do nothing unfair," said Annie, "but on this subject I am quite decided."

Mrs. Piscator made no reply, but shut the door in a way which denoted that her feelings were deeply wounded. How much expression is there in shutting a door! almost as much as in the curl of a lip, or the dilating of an eye! Yes, the closing of that door had a world of concentrated meaning in it.

Ellen shook with nervous apprehension,

and entreated her sister to pay the demand made on them.

“Dear Ellen,” exclaimed Annie, “were I to listen to all your suggestions of this nature, do you know what the result would be?”

“No, indeed.”

“Simply this, that at the end of a few weeks we should be quite bankrupts! Now, Ellen, don’t look so distressed; I don’t mean to follow your advice, and no doubt our loaves and bottles of wine will last till we are provided for.”

“Yes,” said Ellen, “with the blessing of our Father in heaven, they will be like the Widow’s cruse;” and the young creature looked with such an expression of holy trust, that Annie sighed for the same child-like faith.

When the sisters arrived at Mr. St. John’s, in —— Square, they were surprised at the magnificence of the mansion. The door was opened by a superior-looking footman in superb livery, and three more were crossing the marble hall, which was elaborately ornamented and adorned with graceful statues of Venus and Cupid, repeated in various attitudes, but not altogether so well draped as they might have been.

Annie requested to see Mrs. St. John. The servant appeared embarrassed; he opened successively a number of doors round the hall, and as he did so, several ladies were seen sitting in each apartment. "I am afraid there is not a vacant room into which I can show you, ladies," said the man, with such a perfectly well-bred intonation that the sisters were astonished. They would have been less so, had they known his master, who prided himself on being a man of taste, and having everything and everybody surrounding him, to correspond with his reputation for refined elegance.

"Ah, I perceive there is only one lady in the library, how very fortunate!" said the polished footman. "Will you walk in there, ladies?"

"Are all these governesses?" whispered Ellen to Annie.

"They are, madam," said the man.

"Then we have no chance!" involuntarily exclaimed Ellen.

"Pardon me, madam," said the footman, with a bland smile, "if you are the candidate, you have the best chance of any." As he spoke, he placed a chair for Annie and Ellen, and left them. Both instinctively

glanced at their companion. She was young, apparently about two-and-twenty, rather interesting than pretty, and seemed very timid, in fact, trembling with nervousness. Ellen looked her sympathy, and Annie was about to address her, when the door opened, and Mr. and Mrs. St. John entered. The three girls rose, and remained standing, nor were they requested to be seated. Mr. St. John might have been about fifty, or less; he was rather stout, very tall, and had a great air of fashion. He was not handsome, but his style was indisputably aristocratic, and his manner imposing. Without either in words or in tone expressing anything rude, there was something in him which spoke a consciousness of superior standing, and of the inferior social position of those he was addressing. Mrs. St. John was a gentlewoman, had little style, less beauty, and was several years her husband's senior. She had moreover a particularly suspicious and peevish expression, and looked very scrutinizingly at all three of the young women. She seemed very cross till her eye rested on Annie, with whom she appeared pleased, she best knew why; but perhaps it was that she was, to common observers, the plainest! Mr. St. John

glanced approvingly at Miss Jones, *disapprovingly* at Annie; he had not yet observed Ellen, she stood more in the shade. But Mr. and Mrs. St. John did not content themselves with looking; their questions were many and searching. Mr. St. John catechised with the clear, cold enunciation of a man of the world; his wife, on the contrary, with a hurried restlessness of manner peculiarly her own. Her first exclamation on entering the room had been, "What, more governesses! Surely, Fitz, we have seen enough." Mr. St. John had immediately begun to question the applicants, without seeming to notice his wife's remarks. He was soon very busy with Miss Jones, who answered his questions with downcast eyes and a heightened colour. Mr. St. John was pleased; he seemed forgetful of all present but Miss Jones; he admired her extremely, but he was too aristocratic to offer a governess a chair.

Mrs. St. John looked uneasy, "Fitz! Fitz!" said she, sharply, "I think this young person will suit us exactly, she is the——"

"Excuse me, we differ," said Mr. St. John, with perfect good humour; "Miss Sherwood will pardon the remark, but I

think height essential in a governess, it commands respect."

"I did not propose offering myself, I am quite sure it would be useless," said Annie, with a meaning smile; "my younger sister is the applicant," and she turned towards Ellen, whose lovely face was now more completely revealed, allowing Mr. St. John to observe her for the first time. "But I think," continued Annie, addressing herself to the lady, "we had better not trespass longer on your time and attention; my sister is obviously too young."

"Yes, yes, you are quite right, we need not trouble you any further; too young, a great deal too young. Good morning," said Mrs. St. John, hurriedly.

"Excuse me, my dear," said Mr. St. John, with very marked emphasis, an emphasis which showed that he was lord paramount, and that though his wife might keep up a vexatious warfare, she would never come off conqueror in the strife, "wisdom does not always accompany grey hairs."

Mrs. St. John coloured a little, and turned away to conceal her vexation.

"I shall be glad to speak with you in the next room," said Mr. St. John to Ellen; then

turning to Miss Jones, "You would have suited us admirably if—if you had known anything of Spanish."

The poor girl blushed deeply, but slunk away, as if half glad to be dismissed.

"But I know nothing of Spanish, either!" said Ellen, shrinking back involuntarily.

"Don't you?" said Mr. St. John, smiling. "Perhaps you have other accomplishments which may compensate for the absence of that one; and after all, I do not particularly value it."

Mr. St. John then led the way into the next room, intending to have a private conversation with Ellen, but Annie pertinaciously followed.

"I should wish, in a transaction of this kind, to speak alone with the person with whom I negotiate," said Mr. St. John, in a tone of *hauteur* and ill-concealed annoyance.

"My sister is young and inexperienced," replied Annie, coolly, and meeting the eye of the great man with an unflinching look. "She cannot, nor would she if she could, form any engagement, or negotiate for one, without my presence and sanction."

"Indeed!" said Mr. St. John, raising his eyebrows: he then began to converse with

Ellen in the most gently-modulated voice, rather describing to her the position she would hold in his family, the *agrémens* of his seat in Lancashire, the delight he took in assisting in his little girl's studies, &c., than questioning her of her acquirements. Ellen listened, or seemed to listen. Annie tried several times to speak, but could not without actually interrupting Mr. St. John. He spoke neither loudly nor volubly, but his well-formed periods flowed so smoothly one into the other, that no pause occurred.

Mrs. St. John, who had been detained by the arrival of a note, now entered. "I come to remind you, Fitz, that you have an engagement at three."

"Thank you; I was about to ring, and send to remind *you* that Lady Emmeline expects you to call for her at a quarter past two. I hope the carriage is at the door. Pray be punctual; you have not more than five minutes in which to prepare." So saying, Mr. St. John rang the bell to give orders, and politely opening the door for his wife, bowed her out. He then told Ellen that her salary would be seventy guineas; in fact, he was not particular—she might say eighty if she liked. He did not wish his

daughter to be over-educated; provided she was musical, spoke French, and knew sufficient of Italian to understand the poets, he would be satisfied. At this juncture Mrs. St. John put her head round the door in a bonnet of white satin, blonde and feathers,—“French and Italian, of course, Fitz, but you know we must have German too; and ask Miss Sherwood if she undertakes to teach thoroughly, Ancient and Modern History, the Celestial and Terrestrial Globes, Arithmetic in its advanced stages, Natural History, Botany, Chemistry, Con——”

Mrs. St. John spoke as rapidly as she could enunciate—so rapidly, that it was difficult to follow her meaning. It was long ere Mr. St. John succeeded in interrupting the torrent, though he held up both his hands in mock supplication. “Excuse me, my dear,” said he, with his accustomed urbanity; “but Lady Emmeline waits: and, besides, I detest all these things too heartily myself, to impose such severe studies on my daughter.” He took his wife’s hand, and led her courteously to the carriage, she talking to him all the time in earnest, angry tones of expostulation, and once Annie thought she distinguished the word “minx;” but Mr. St. John was smiling

and bowing, as if in reply to the most agreeable compliments. When he returned to the room, it was to request that Ellen would call in a day or two; he then dismissed her with evident reluctance, though all the time he had kept her standing like a waiting-maid.

“I wonder,” said Ellen, when the sisters had left the house,—“I wonder whether they will grant me the use of a chair if I go there!”

“Should you like to go to them?” asked Annie, anxiously.

“Oh, no; I don’t think I should like it at all,” said Ellen.

“Has Mrs. St. John’s cross face frightened you?”

“No; but I don’t like him, though I could not give any particular reason for my dislike.”

“But I can,” said Annie; “you are beginning to read countenances. No; you must not go there.”

“I would much rather go to the Cliftons, with half the salary,” said Ellen.

The girls were both wearied; an omnibus passed invitingly at the moment, and they entered it. At the further end sat a middle-aged woman, whom they recognised immediately

as some one they had seen before. Annie looked at her very earnestly; there was a great deal of shrewdness and determination in her countenance. She, too, looked attentively at the sisters. At last she bent forward, and said to Annie, "I saw you at Mrs. Piscator's this morning. You have been to offer at Mr. St. John's; so have I. The place is a good one. Do either of you mean to take it?"

"No," said Annie; "it is open for any other person, as far as we are concerned."

"Right," said their new acquaintance; "you are both too young, and one of you too pretty, for that house!"

"Do you mean to go there?" asked Ellen, innocently.

"I, my dear? Yes, if they would have me, but they wont. I am too old, and too ugly. Madame (who has a particular dislike to ornamental pieces of furniture) would have engaged me, but the husband quickly negatived the business, and showed me how to turn the handle of the door. I'll tell you what,—that man wants no governess for his daughter, but some one to flirt with and amuse him; and whoever went there (who had youth or good looks) would be insulted

by his impudence on the one hand, and tormented by the old wife's jealousy on the other." The lady spoke energetically, and, as she spoke, thrust her umbrella into the side of the unfortunate conductor:—"Piccadilly! why didn't you put me down at Regent's Circus?"

"Put you down directly, Mem; wish I'd done it before!" said the conductor, leaping from his perch like a squirrel.

"Is every undertaking thus to be overthrown?" murmured Annie, as they entered their humble dwelling.

"No," said Ellen (eagerly seizing a letter that lay on the table); "here is a letter from Mr. Clifton; I shall do better with the Cliftons at thirty or forty pounds a year, than with the St. Johns at the highest salary."

Annie and Ellen read the letter together. Mrs. Clifton would be glad to receive Ellen at her earliest convenience; they had heard all that was satisfactory from Miss Brentford, and felt assured that they were securing at once a valuable instructress for their children, and a friend for themselves. The carriage and man-servant should meet Miss Sherwood at any hour she liked to appoint.

The salary (as their income was limited) would be necessarily moderate,—that is, *twelve* pounds a year,—and their governess paid her own laundress!

To accept such terms was impossible, and poor Ellen saw her fabric of hope overthrown. She said nothing, but the tears flowed freely down her cheeks. Annie, who was less passive, sat down to write and decline the offer, plainly stating the reason, and animadverting, more than prudence warranted, on the inadequacy of the terms proposed, for the amount of labour demanded in return. Annie found relief and consolation in thus boldly expressing her feelings of indignation; she was becoming quite resolute in her assurance that she must expect nothing but injustice and oppression, and seemed to feel that the prophecy with regard to Ishmael would be fulfilled in her case,—“Every man’s hand shall be against him,” &c.

Several days passed without bringing any brighter prospects to the Sherwoods. They were then summoned to wait on several “distinguished ladies” (as the agents called them), who examined their persons with supercilious curiosity, and catechised them with all the arrogant authority of wealth.

All these negotiations ended in disappointment. Ellen was too pretty ; Annie did not know enough ; and yet her real amount of knowledge would have made those who affected to despise her attainments, blush at their own ignorance.

Weeks went by, and still the sisters lingered on in their humble lodgings, hoping against hope, and daily contriving some further retrenchment to eke out their little remaining store, which, nevertheless, rapidly diminished. In vain Annie searched day after day in the columns of the *Times* ; she rarely met with any advertisement at all suitable to Ellen or herself, or, if she did, and applied for the engagement, her letter seldom produced a reply.

On one occasion, however, her hopes were momentarily raised by the reception of a very pleasing note, requesting her to call in ——— Street at any hour that would be most convenient to herself. “ Most wonderful condescension, Annie ! ” exclaimed Ellen, looking up, as though she had made some strange discovery. “ Annie, do you know — I think — that is to say, I’m afraid that this lady will offer you *nothing a year* ! ”

“ What makes you think so ? ”

“The note is so polite,” said Ellen, “so very polite ; and you know that clergyman’s was so too, and he offered me 12*l.* a year !”

“We shall see !” said Annie, with a languid smile, for her hopes were not very bright. She found little to reply to Ellen’s doubts and fears. Mrs. Weldon was a plain, unostentatious person, the wife of a merchant, apparently able and willing to offer a liberal salary. She demanded nothing unreasonable, unless it were that the governess should spend thirteen hours daily in the charge of her pupils, Mrs. Weldon ingenuously remarking that her own temper was peculiarly irritable ; consequently the children could not spend any time with her, lest her example should prove injurious to their moral training, and she could not, of course, allow them to be under the care of servants. One more drawback there was to this very eligible appointment—the governess was expected to wash and dress her *élèves* ; in fact, to perform all the duties of a *bonne*. And yet there was no haughty assumption on the part of Mrs. Weldon—nothing to indicate that she would regard her children’s instructress in the light of a menial, though she required her to fulfil a menial’s duties.

In vain Annie Sherwood opposed argument to the last demand. Mrs. Weldon was not offended at her reluctance to undertake the work of a nurse, but continued to insist on its necessity. Annie's proud spirit revolted at the thought of such imposed menial labour; she rose, and asked leave to have time for consideration. Mrs. Weldon acceded to the latter wish, and further informed her that they lived quite alone; never visited nor received visitors; and being averse to all sorts of light recreations, were anxious that every member of their family should conform to their rules, confining their attention to religious works.

Annie had said she would consider, and she had said so with the half-formed resolution of rejecting the engagement; but when she had really reflected—really compared Mrs. Weldon with the other parties who had honoured her with their notice, she decided that even with nurserymaid's duties to perform, and the prospect of a life equally fatiguing and monotonous, the engagement in question was infinitely preferable to any other which had as yet offered. She therefore wrote to Mrs. Weldon, and accepted her terms. Mrs. Weldon wished to secure

Annie's services, knew something of her connexions, and consequently (being rather averse to any avoidable exertion) dispensed with some of the usual formalities. The engagement was concluded. Annie was to enter on her new and untried duties, the moment her sister was provided with a home. A brilliant offer came for Ellen—came just at the moment it was most desired.

Sir James and Lady Mildred were desirous of procuring a governess for their two younger daughters, sufficiently accomplished to instruct them in French, Italian, and music, and sufficiently young, not to alarm them by any austerity. In fact, she was to unite, as far as possible, the character of a playmate and that of an instructress. Ellen answered exactly to the description. Sir James and Lady Mildred were no longer young. Sir James was immersed in Parliamentary affairs, and was of a serious character; her ladyship was of "no character at all." There was no fear of finding a Mr. and Mrs. St. John in Sir James and Lady Mildred.

Ellen had been instructed by the agent who negotiated the business to call on him for instructions before presenting herself at

the Baronet's. She therefore went to his office, accompanied by Annie.

The agent strenuously endeavoured to impress on Ellen's mind the importance and aristocratic pretensions of the Mildred family. "It was an honour to *serve* them in any capacity; such families were not to be met with every day, he could tell her." Mr. de F—— then ran over the list of requirements.

"I am afraid," stammered Ellen, who was frightened rather than charmed with the brilliant description of the Mildred family,—“I am afraid, very much afraid, that it is far beyond me!” but Mr. de F—— showed such evident signs of displeasure that she was reduced to silence, especially after he had resolutely stamped his foot, and declared that she *must*, and should, call on Lady Mildred. What was a timid girl to that petty tyrant? Ellen withdrew submissively, and immediately proceeded to —— Place, where, as she had been instructed, she inquired, not for Lady Mildred, but for Mrs. Stokes-Delville, formerly a governess in her ladyship's family, now her confidential *employée*.

Mrs. Stokes-Delville entered the drawing-

room, into which the sisters had been shown, with that sort of half-patronising air so frequently seen in those, who from very subordinate positions, have become confidential friends of the great. She was affable and condescending, and after a half-hour's conversation, left the room to inform Lady Mildred of the result of her examination of the governess candidate. After a short lapse of time, Mrs. Stokes-Delville re-entered, and obsequiously held the door open till a lady followed, who looked old, very mentally and physically weak, and very, very aristocratic. Lady Mildred advanced, seated herself in a chaise-longue, and took a survey of the sisters in perfect silence. Her examination might have lasted about two minutes, certainly not longer. She rose, and murmuring "I am very much prepossessed," slowly left the room as she had entered, followed by Mrs. Stokes-Delville.

Mrs. Stokes-Delville (there is a pleasure in repeating that name) was absent some time, and then returned to renew the conversation. She repeated what Lady Mildred had said, at least taking her short sentence of approbation, as a text for a lengthened discourse.

So far the negotiation had proceeded favourably ; a liberal salary was offered, and many advantages loomed in the distance. As she and Ellen were withdrawing, Annie ventured to inquire what holidays Ellen would have ; for she had laid, as she thought, a charming little plan, which would enable them to meet and spend a few weeks together once a year.

“Holidays !” repeated Mrs. Stokes-Delville ; “I had the honour of spending twelve years in the family of Lady Mildred, and never thought of asking for holidays ; and when the advantages are so manifest, I cannot think what more can be required.”

“It is painful to break near and dear ties, and to part from those with whom we have been accustomed to the daily and hourly interchange of thought through life,” said Annie : “without the consolatory hope of occasionally renewed intercourse, it would be unbearable.”

“Pardon me, Miss Sherwood,” said Mrs. Stokes-Delville ; “but, from our previous conversation, I had supposed you stronger-minded ! Surely you would not put these petty considerations, these sentimental pue-

ILITIES, in competition with the duty an instructress owes her pupils?"

"You have been a governess yourself, Mrs. Stokes," said Annie.

"Stokes-Delville, if you please, Miss Sherwood! Yes, I have had the honour of residing in Sir James Mildred's family for twelve years, and well know the advantage of such a position. I never had any holidays; I never wanted any; and I was amply recompensed for the self-denial I exercised by the generosity and condescension of my patrons. Indeed, when I left the house (I am now merely on a visit, for I have retired on funded property), *Sir James himself did me the honour to shake hands with me*; her ladyship presented me with a valuable work-box, inlaid, and beautifully fitted up, and assured me she should always feel the liveliest interest in my welfare. I think that quite enough to reconcile one to a little restraint."

Annie's face expressed plainly that neither the handsomest workbox ever made, nor shaking hands with a duke, would reconcile her to imprisonment; but she tried to repress her feelings, and inquired how many hours

her sister would be required to devote daily to her pupils. "From seven in the morning till nine in the evening," was the reply. She was about to remark thereon, when Ellen hastily interrupted her, and expressed her willingness to comply with Lady Mildred's conditions.

Mrs. Stokes-Delville then graciously dismissed the Sherwoods with a bow, practised on the model of Lady Mildred's for many a long year.

"Ellen!" exclaimed Annie, when the ponderous hall-door closed behind them, "I cannot bear that you should sell yourself to such bondage! Let us take the little money we have left, and go to Australia!"

"We have not enough," said Ellen, dejectedly; "7*l*. 10*s*. is all that remains. I counted it this morning. I must go to Lady Mildred's!" she added, sighing. But Ellen had only her own consent thereto; the same evening a note arrived from Mrs. Stokes-Delville, declining Miss Sherwood's services, as she (Mrs. Stokes-Delville) feared, from the morning's conversation, that Miss S—— would not be as devoted to the charming Miss Mildreds as she could wish, who had

had the honour of instructing their elder sisters twelve years, and who now enjoyed the friendship of their parents.

The same post brought a letter from Mr. Weldon, regretting (in his wife's name) that they must be deprived of the services of their young Christian friend. They had met with a lady in some respects more suitable, but still regretted, &c.

Once more, then, the sisters were thrown on the wide world, to concert new plans, raise fresh hopes (if they could), and recommence researches which had no longer the charm of novelty to recommend them!

CHAPTER VI.

“ANNIE dear, let us try another agency,” said Ellen; “perhaps we shall be more fortunate in our next attempt.”

“Yes, let us try another,” said Annie; “let us go directly.”

“Wont to-morrow do?”

“No, darling, there is no time like the present,” said Annie, gently.

Ellen yielded, as was her wont, but without alacrity; she was beginning to feel very, very weary of those long walks, that brought with them delusive hopes, to be immediately overthrown by bitter disappointment.

The new agent to whom they applied was one of extensive connexion, and real respectability. He was a clerical as well as a scholastic agent, and apparently transacted his business without extravagant professions of zeal in the service of his clients, but with regard to their interests as well as his

own. The curates, tutors, and governesses applying to him for engagements were consequently so numerous, that he found it impossible to meet all their demands. He had therefore adopted the equitable plan of only receiving fees from those whom he actually succeeded in placing, and whoever applied to him was sure of meeting with civility, if not success.

Annie and Ellen Sherwood were received by Mr. Major with courtesy, but requested to wait a short time, till he had finished a conversation with a gentleman with whom he had been conversing on their entrance. The sisters sat down to await the agent's leisure.

Nearly opposite to them was seated a young man in shabby black, very sallow and unhealthy, but he had a pleasing countenance, lit by luminous dark eyes, and an expression of thought and earnest feeling. He was not handsome, still, it was a beautiful countenance, a spiritual, chastened-looking face, which the eye would seek again and again, and never weary in perusing. In one hand the poor curate held a shabby pocket-book, the other was industriously endeavouring to conceal the torn cuff of his

coat, while his hat, which lay on a chair beside him, though smoothly brushed, was almost guiltless of nap.

At length the person with whom Mr. Major had been conversing was dismissed. He then turned to the threadbare curate. "I am sorry to keep you waiting, Mr. Stancliff," said he, courteously.

"Thank you, I have no other engagement," said he, with a low sigh; "I can wait without inconvenience."

Then the agent would like to know Annie's business. Annie briefly, but clearly explained what she and her sister wanted, and stated how little they undertook.

"Do you think we have any chance of employment?" asked Ellen, with a tremulous voice.

"We have a great many applicants," said Mr. Major, "but I will do all I can."

"Thank you," said Annie, gratefully. She believed the promise, and to see that she believed it, raised Ellen's spirits. The Sherwoods rose to depart, the shabby curate rose too; he opened the door for them, and in so doing displayed his torn cuff, then coloured with confusion.

Before the door closed they heard Mr.

Major say, "I am sorry to tell you, Mr. Stancliff, that the curacy is gone."

"Gone!" repeated the young man, in great agitation, "gone, did you say?"

"Oh, Annie!" exclaimed Ellen, "he is in distress. I thought he was!"

"Who is in distress?" said Annie, abstractedly.

"That amiable-looking—that poor young man, I mean," said Ellen, blushing.

"Yes, I dare say he is," said Annie; "but one's own anxieties make the heart selfish. You have observed him more closely than I."

"I could not help noticing him," rejoined Ellen; "he was directly opposite to me, and besides, being a clergyman, and——"

"And having very fine eyes!" interrupted Annie.

"I don't know, I—I did not notice," said Ellen.

"Nonsense, Ellen, you know you did! Is he not something like our rustic friend, Charles Turner?"

"Oh, no!" cried Ellen, warmly, "not the least; he has a pale, melancholy face, what Lavater calls 'a spiritually beautiful countenance!'"

“Indeed!” said Annie. “Ellen! Ellen! this looks very like what romancers call ‘love at first sight!’”

“Pray do not talk so,” said Ellen; “I am not quite so silly as you think, only I thought him very amiable and——”

“What proof did he give of being amiable?”

“He opened the door for us.”

“Did he! Dear child, don’t you know that any man of the world would have done the same?”

“Yes, but not in the same manner,” persisted Ellen.

“I grant you that some people might perform the same action less graciously, but still they would do it. What shall we do, Ellen?”

“What about, dear?”

“If you grow romantic! Don’t you know, child, no one would put up with a romantic governess. How will you ever——”

“I shall try to put our father’s precepts in practice,” said Ellen, seriously. “I shall do my duty, and leave all the consequences to God.” There was an earnestness and clinging faith in Ellen’s religious feelings which gave an air of dignity to their expres-

sion, and inspired respect. Annie was silent and thoughtful; she was brooding over her young sister's words, and wishing she could more fully enter into her feelings. Happy had it been for her could her wish have been accomplished. As it was, with a host of fine qualities and generous passions, Annie Sherwood was about to enter the "battle of life" aided by no stronger weapons of defence, girt with no other armour, than that of her own strong will and unbending spirit.

Another fortnight of patient waiting. A note came from Mr. Major, requesting Ellen to call at No. ———, ——— Street, upon a lady who required a governess for two little girls.

Mrs. Harrington was not in the drawing-room on the Sherwoods' arrival, but soon after entered. She was rather faded, and wore a look of fatigue and sorrow on her gentle countenance, but was still a lovely woman. She led in with her two beautiful children.

"Which is the Miss Sherwood recommended by Mr. Major?" asked Mrs. Harrington, after she had courteously greeted both the sisters. When Ellen was designated, a shade of disappointment crossed the lady's face.

“I am afraid—that is, I think I need not trouble you by inquiries. I fear you will not suit me;” but she spoke almost apologetically, as if she were saying something very unkind.

“I shall not suit you!” repeated Ellen; “oh, I am so sorry, so very sorry!”

“Why?” asked Mrs. Harrington, in a yet softer tone of voice.

“Because—because—” faltered Ellen, “of all the ladies I have seen, you are the first, the very first, that has spoken kindly to me.”

“Poor girl!” said Mrs. Harrington, seating herself beside Ellen, while she took one of her hands in hers; “no, I cannot have you, but——”

“My sister knows much more than her youthful appearance would lead you to suppose,” said Annie, who felt that if they must part she would give worlds to leave Ellen in such gentle hands.

“I dare say she does,” replied Mrs. Harrington. “I am not very anxious, at least, I trust not over-anxious, for my children to be accomplished. I would rather that they should be trained to shine in heaven than to glitter in the world.”

"Ellen is a Christian in heart and life," said Annie, warmly.

"I have not one doubt of that," said Mrs. Harrington, "but I will tell you frankly why I cannot engage your sister. I have known much sorrow, as I think my countenance must show you, sorrow that has taught me caution; your sister is too young and beautiful for me."

"Too beautiful!" exclaimed the astonished Ellen.

"Yes, too beautiful," repeated Mrs. Harrington, slowly. "There are reasons (apart, I trust, from any unworthy or ungenerous feelings in me,) which would render you a dangerous inmate. Stay a few minutes," she added, seeing that the disappointed girls rose to depart; "you must need refreshment after your long walk."

Mrs. Harrington constrained the Sherwoods to remain, and ordered luncheon.

There was something so sweet, so loveable, in the very sound of Mrs. Harrington's tunable voice, something so charming in

"The music breathing from her face," that Annie was as much pleased with her as the confiding Ellen. Her manner was more than courteous, it was friendly; and she

seemed as much interested in her new acquaintance, as they were fascinated by her. Without any appearance of indelicate curiosity, she succeeded in drawing forth their history. Ere they departed she said to Ellen, "Though I must not have you myself, I may perhaps be enabled to recommend you."

Ellen's face beamed with gratitude which she could not express. "I will make every inquiry among my friends, and—but you will call again," added Mrs. Harrington, hastily. "Yet no, I had better call on you;" and in completing her sentence, Mrs. Harrington's face flushed with extraordinary emotion. There was a mystery attending her which Ellen's simplicity could not unravel; to Annie it was no mystery at all.

"Mamma! mamma!" said one of the children, as the Sherwoods were about to withdraw; "I don't think Miss Sherwood beautiful at all! Do let her come to teach me. I should love her so much! and I'm quite sure she is not beautiful at all!"

"You are very complimentary, Harry," said Mrs. Harrington. "What will Miss Sherwood think of my spoilt boy?"

"I love him for his truthfulness," said Ellen.

“But you don’t understand him,” said the lady; “he thinks that to be beautiful is very wicked.”

“Yes, it is wicked!” exclaimed the boy, vehemently, “very wicked. I hate beautiful people, ever since Miss Germains was here. She was beautiful—and you cried all day and papa scolded you, and——”

“Hush, hush! dear Harry! you are talking of what you do not understand; run away now, and play.”

“But I do understand, mamma; I understand very, very well. Miss Germains was beautiful and—I hate all beautiful people, and I want Miss Sherwood to come and teach me. *She* wouldn’t make you cry!”

“No one makes me cry, love,” said the mother, clasping the boy in her arms, though her eyes filled with tears at the time. Mrs. Harrington shook hands warmly with Annie and Ellen, and promising that they should hear from her directly she had anything good to communicate, she took their address, looked at her watch anxiously, and then out of the window, as if she did not wish to detain them longer.

“How very strange,” said Ellen, when they had left the door; “Mrs. Harrington

seemed to take an extraordinary and sudden interest in us, and yet towards the close of our visit she was evidently anxious to see us away!"

"Not at all strange," said Annie, "she expected him home."

"Expected whom?"

"Her husband, to be sure; she is an angel, but mated with one of earth's grossest sons. I am not surprised that she could not venture to take you, Ellen. Did I not tell you that your pretty face would mar your prospects?"

"But what is a mere pretty face, beside one so incomparably lovely as Mrs. Harrington's?" said Ellen.

"Novelty, of course," said Annie. "Mr. Harrington has read every line in his wife's face, till he is wearied of it, and can no longer discover any beauty there."

"How can he be so heartless!" said Ellen.

"He is a man!" replied Annie.

"My dear Annie! a stranger who heard you talk thus, would think some one had deceived you, and left a bitter impression of the whole sex!"

"No, no, I have never been deceived," said Annie, quickly, "nor shall I be. No

man shall ever have it in his power to say he has deceived Annie Sherwood ! I was not made for the puerilities of commonplace love affairs."

"But apart from all that sort of thing, you must believe in love !"

"Yes, yes, in love," said Annie ; "but my ideas on the subject are *exaltées* ; I have dreamt of unrealized perfection. Had I lived in the days of the young Earth, I should have been one of the daughters of men who sang—

‘ Come pray with me, my seraph love !
My angel lord, come pray with me !’

I should have had no charms to cause an angel’s fall, but I should have had the soul to turn from earth’s earthly sons to the worship of some glorious seraph. Ellen ! Ellen ! I forget myself ! I am asleep, and you are asleep ; I am visioning a fallen Raphael ; you, dreaming of the shabby curate we saw the other day. But, Ellen dear, we must wake—wake and remember I am not at the gates of a lost Eden ; you, not in the pleasant parlour of a pretty curacy ! No, we are volunteer governesses, ready to give up our lives and liberty to the highest bidder, and moreover we have just 6*l.* 13*s.* in our pockets."

But though Annie Sherwood spoke thus, and tried hard to chase away her own dreamy visions with a scornful laugh, she still dreamt on.

Long days and longer weeks went by. The Sherwoods had spent their last guinea. Again they talked of economizing: they had nothing wherewith to economize. Want, actual want, stared them in the face. Which way were they to turn? to whom could they apply for assistance? To Bertha? What could she do for them? Lend them a portion of her hardly-earned stipend? No, that they could not ask; all she had for her labour (and that was little enough) went to supply the necessities of a widowed mother.

The Sherwoods' last shilling had been given to their landlady, the morrow would find them without a meal. "I will do it!" exclaimed Annie, starting from a reverie in which she had long been plunged, with her hands tightly clasped on her forehead,—“I will do it!”

“What are you going to do?” cried Ellen, in alarm at her sister's agitation.

“Provide for you and myself!” said Annie, as she seated herself and seized a pen.

“How, dearest?”

“You will see.” Annie wrote a few hurried lines; they were these:—

“If Charles Turner is still desirous of marrying Annie Sherwood, she will gratefully accept his offer.”

“For me!” exclaimed Ellen, who had looked over her sister’s shoulder, “for me, Annie! No, you shall never sacrifice yourself for me!” and speaking with unwonted resolution, she snatched the letter, and tore it up.

“What are you doing?” cried Annie.

“Saving you. You must not marry your inferior. Were it I, the disproportion would not be so great, but you—it would make your misery for life.”

“What is to become of us?” said Annie.

“Annie, Annie! Have you never read in the Word of God, ‘Yet saw I never the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread’? It is impossible for the children of our Father to starve; it is sinful in them to despair! Come, Annie, let us try Mrs. Piscator once more.”

For a brief space the sisters had changed characters; it was Ellen who led, and Annie who followed. They proceeded to Mrs. Piscator’s, but not being rich enough to

possess a watch between them, they were so unfortunate as to arrive after the hours usually allotted to business, and that was a great crime. The Sherwoods were admitted, however, by a servant, who was forgetful of the hour, or else had forgotten the rules of the Establishment, or "Institution," as its proprietor called it. The two girls remained some time in the dingy waiting-room. At length a head of curls and a pair of naked shoulders were thrust in the door-way, which were unmistakeably appertaining to Miss Piscator. "Dear me ! Miss Sherwood, I declare ! Well, I never ! but ma can't see you ; I'm sure she can't ; why, it's long past time !"

"I am sorry to break your mamma's rules," said Annie, "but I really had no idea of the time. We have come from a considerable distance, so I hope Mrs. Piscator can see us ; we shall not detain her five minutes."

"I shall do nothing of the kind !" exclaimed a very wrathful voice, and a full, red face, still more inflamed by passion, showed itself. "See you, indeed ! Pray what do you mean by coming here at this hour of the day ! half-past four ! What do you mean by it, I say ?"

“Ma,” interposed Miss Piscator, “ma, Miss Sherwood didn’t know it was so late.”

“Don’t tell me, she knew well enough,” vociferated the energetic lady. “Base ingratitude, after all I have done for you !”

“I know of nothing you have done for me which merits particular gratitude, Mrs. Piscator,” said Annie, resolutely ; “or if any obligation exists, I believe it must be mutual. You have acted, I suppose, professionally ; had you placed me, you no doubt fully intended receiving the customary fee.”

“Get out of my house ! Never dare to enter these doors again !” cried the infuriated Mrs. Piscator.

“I have no intention of doing so,” said Annie, “it would be useless in any sense ;” and as she spoke, she and Ellen walked towards the door, but not quickly enough to effect a safe retreat, for Mrs. Piscator’s rage triumphing over her corpulent frame, she rushed on Annie like a tigress on its prey, and while pouring forth a torrent of reproaches, shook her violently by the shoulders, and then pushed her over the threshold with such force that she staggered, and would have fallen on the pavement had not her terrified sister caught her

in her arms. "Are you hurt, dearest?" faltered the agitated Ellen.

"No, dear Ellen," replied Annie, compressing her white lips, while her livid countenance betrayed the truth that she had really suffered.

"No, not hurt, Ellen; but that woman has taught me another lesson. Come, let us go home."

"Oh, that we were both going home!" ejaculated Ellen; "home to our Father in Heaven! home to the peaceful rest of the grave! Annie, this business has quite overwhelmed my little courage."

"And your faith?" asked Annie.

"Not dead—not quite dead!" said Ellen, colouring deeply. "Who knows what Providence has in store for us!"

"Who, indeed!" said Annie, with a sigh. "That woman's insolence has had a strange effect on me, Ellen; it has hardened me. Each fresh insult that the world heaps on me seems to give me stronger powers of resistance—a more iron will to struggle against oppression."

However Annie might express herself, she felt, at least physically, the effects of the rough treatment she had received; and on

entering their little room she was obliged to lie down, faint and exhausted, while Ellen busied herself in preparing their scanty tea. While thus occupied, the question arose in her mind—"How will another meal be secured?" An involuntary ejaculation, "What shall we do?" roused Annie. "I'll tell you," said she. "Our money has gone, and we are unprovided for; we must get more money!"

"How can we?"

"By borrowing."

"And how are we to borrow in this strange place? Poor Bertha, to my certain knowledge, sent all her last quarter to her mother, excepting a few shillings.

"And if she had not, we must not borrow from her," said Annie, quickly; "still, I think we could get a little."

"From where? Do explain, dear Annie."

"From a pawnbroker. Do you not know what that means?"

"Yes, I think so," said Ellen, faintly smiling; "but what could we take him?"

"The six old silver tea-spoons," said Annie, "which I put in my desk before the sale at Merton."

"How are we to find a pawnbroker's?"

asked Ellen, after weighing the new ideas presented to her mind.

“They have three golden balls hung out in front of their houses,” said Annie. “The arms of Lombardy; you know the Lombards were in olden times the money-lenders.”

“I can’t think how you find out all these things,” said Ellen.

“I have read about the pawnbrokers’ signs somewhere,” said Annie; “besides, as I foresaw to-day’s necessities, I took occasion to make inquiries a week ago. But don’t trouble your mind about it, Ellen; it is not fitting work for you. I shall be up early to-morrow, and go about it before breakfast. We have tea and bread enough for the morning, I think?”

“Yes, I think so!” said Ellen, slowly putting back the crust she had just taken on her plate.

“Ellen! Ellen! you will break my heart!” exclaimed Annie, with tears. “Did you not tell me not to doubt Providence, darling? Let us, then, take what God sends us to-day, and trust to Him for to-morrow’s provision. My mind is darkened, and full of bitterness and doubt; but yours, darling, was made for

looking up, and confiding trust. You must not doubt!"

"I know I am wrong to doubt a gracious Providence," said Ellen. "I will try and hope more; but now, my Annie, take this cup of tea I have poured out for you, and lie down again."

Annie did as she was desired, and soon fell into a deep sleep. Ellen covered her sister up carefully, screened her eyes from the light, and then taking the old silver teaspoons from their resting-place, she sallied forth she knew not well whither.

It was dusk, and the lamps were being lit; it was Saturday evening, too, which Annie had forgotten, and Ellen had only just remembered. E—— Street was a crowded thoroughfare; for at one end a number of itinerant vendors of vegetables, fruit, fish, penny toys, &c., had congregated, and with stentorian lungs were calling on the bystanders to make purchases. Here, a ballad-singer, accompanied by three or four children, hired for the occasion, was endeavouring to extort money from the passers-by, by sounds, not such as drew back Eurydice from the infernal regions, but dismal cries, something between the groans of

despair from a rack, and the noise from a broken-winded pair of bellows. There, an itinerant dealer in penny pies boasted the excellence of his merchandise in a cracked voice, momentarily drowned by the stronger lungs of an umbrella mender, who in his turn was forced to succumb to the rival cries of a grinder of scissors and penknives. Ellen had never witnessed such a scene before; she walked through it stunned and confused; but in the midst of her confusion she contrived to find the three golden balls, though she was sadly at a loss by which door to enter the premises, as two stood open. For awhile she hesitated, and remained looking in at the window, in which were displayed an immense number of forfeited pledges—watches, brooches, rings and other trinkets; and, sadder still, miniatures of perhaps idolized features, crosses, stars and medals, once the pride and honour of the wearers.

While Ellen Sherwood stood undecided, a woman approached with a bundle under her arm, and she, too, passed in front of the window,—not, like Ellen, in ignorance of the path; she knew it too well; she crossed that sad threshold every Saturday night!

At the same moment a tall young man in black came up. "Can you tell me," said he, to the woman with the bundle—"can you tell me which is the door?" and he spoke in a low voice, as if he were ashamed.

"Not the shopway," said the woman. "There, that door down the dark passage."

The young man shot into a long, dark passage, with a hurried "Thank you;" but his voice left an echo in Ellen's ear, if not in her heart; she had heard it before somewhere—it was a sweet, gentle voice.

Ellen walked slowly down the dark, long passage—very dark, very long. Accidentally her hand came in contact with the handle of a door; she seized it at hazard. The door opened with a spring, and showed a little box against the counter; therein stood the young man who had just entered, a jet of gas from the well-lighted shop revealing him fully. The door quickly slid from Ellen's hand, and shut with a loud noise. On she groped her way; tried another door; within was the woman with her bundle. On a third trial, Ellen found the little box to contain three or four ragged children, with a pair of flat irons. In her fourth attempt

she was more successful; she found the little box vacant, and entered. The people of the shop were too busy to notice her, and she had time to observe not only her next door neighbour's flat irons pledged for twopence a piece, but the poor woman's bundle opened, and a quantity of wearing apparel which it contained, surrendered for the trifling consideration of three shillings and sixpence. The poor woman sighed piteously as she took what might be her last look of a little frock worn by a dead child, that misery and starvation had consigned to an untimely grave. There was her own Sunday gown too, but she did not think of that; her moist eyes were fixed on the little braided frock, and she stretched out her hand to touch it once more, while the pawnbroker's man was rolling up the bundle. "Please take care of it, sir!" said the woman, timidly. "You've got a penny, m'em, for the ticket, 'aven't you?" asked the man, without noticing her request.

"No, sir," she answered, sighing. So the poor woman received 3s. 5d., with a diminutive bit of pasteboard; and with a piteous look at the bundle which contained

the dead child's frock, she made way for another woman, almost as dejected looking as herself.

Ellen could not help looking beyond, to see what the next applicant would bring. He had laid three books on the counter. "We can't take them," said the man, deliberately. "They ain't at all in our way."

"They are valuable old books," said the gentleman, "and worth several pounds."

"Can't help it; in books we go mostly by the outside," said the clerk; "we could make nothing at all of such shabby-bound things. Who'd buy them?"

"But there is no danger of their being sold; I shall return for them in a few weeks."

"So all the folks say that bring their things to pledge, from a flat iron up to a thirty guinea watch," said the man, with a vulgar chuckle; "I dare say they think it, poor ——; but if you'll look round the premises, sir, 'specially at the window, you'll see what stuff their hopes are made of."

The applicant did not reply, but he took up his precious books fondly, for he was a true student, and in silence placed an old-fashioned silver watch on the counter. "How

much?" said the pawnbroker. "3*l*. 10*s*." said the student. "1*l*. 10*s*." replied the pawnbroker; so the business was settled, the ticket written, and Ellen heard the same sweet voice that she had before noticed give the name of Richard Stancliff. She was so lost in sympathy and pity that she had forgotten her own errand, and was only roused from a deep reverie, by hearing the shopman say, "Well, miss, what's your pleasure?" Ellen started. "My pleasure," she repeated; "it is no pleasure!" "Well, then, your business, miss?" "This," said Ellen, slowly recovering her recollection; "I want to borrow some money." "On what?" Ellen handed the spoons. "Thin and light," said the man, poising one of the tea-spoons on his finger; "how much?" "Two pounds," said Ellen. "Make it eighteen shillings to oblige you, miss." "That must suffice, then, I suppose," said Ellen. She received the money with a sinking heart, after giving her name and address. As she bent forward to take the money, she perceived that Mr. Stancliff had not left the counter. She fancied he was listening to her; it was not very well-bred, but she could not be angry with him for listening, as her conscience told

her she had been doing the same thing ; in fact, if her conscience had not reproved her, she could not be angry at all. She secured her little ticket (which the pawnbroker, perceiving her to be a novice, had cautioned her to preserve very carefully), and went out.

Ellen neither looked behind her nor yet to the right or left ; but still she was conscious that some one was walking her road, and conscious, too, that that some one was the shabby curate with the torn cuff. She was conscious, moreover, of a strange fluttering at her heart. What could that be ? She quickened her pace ; the steps behind came quicker. Ellen reached her abode, and entered, without once turning her head round to ascertain whether her impressions were correct. She found Annie awake, and uneasy at her absence ; but she easily explained the cause of her late ramble, and found, to her mortification, that she had accepted a sum very much beneath the real value of the spoons.

Ellen was in very low spirits the next day ; but about five o'clock in the evening the shabby curate passed by their little window, and the next day, and the next to that,

and it gave Ellen something to think about, and diverted her mind from the constant contemplation of the rapidly-diminishing eighteen shillings.

CHAPTER VII.

THE eighteen shillings were not immortal, as Annie and Ellen Sherwood found to their sorrow. Their prospects with regard to employment had not yet brightened, and at length they grew so familiar with the road to the three golden balls, that their already scanty wardrobes became more and more slender. In vain had they besieged agency offices, and answered advertisements. None of the countless applications produced any other result than disappointment. At length, in trembling anticipation of a yet darker future, Annie resolved to take in needlework (provided she could obtain any), while she prosecuted her researches for a governess engagement. But to resolve on humble industry was one thing ; to obtain means of exercising that industry, quite another. She had no one to whom she could apply for assistance, or even advice, and actual destitution threatened them. Which way could she turn in her difficulties ?

Full of perplexing thoughts, she one day sallied forth, and wandered into a part of the town, in which she had observed several ready-made clothes shops. She entered five successively; in four, her offers of service were rejected: in the fifth she might have had employment, but the people required a deposit for the materials entrusted to her care, and of course Annie had not that to give.

Weary, faint, and hungry, poor Annie leaned for support on the counter, and tears filled her eyes; but they that looked on were hard people of business. They noted not the pale cheek, the quivering lip, the tearful eye of the young woman that leaned on their shop-board; how should they note these things? Annie went out of the shop with a dizzy brain, and a sense of hunger and weariness such as she had never felt before, and she passed on slowly through the lines of brilliantly-lit shops, and saw the tide of human beings busy, striving, jostling one another, and her heart grew sadder and her step fainter as she whispered, "Room for all but us!"

Just as she was debating in her mind whether she should apply at another shop or not, a little child ran out of an open door in

pursuit of a rolling marble, and heedlessly rushed after it into the throng of coaches and other vehicles. The sight of the child's danger restored Annie Sherwood to herself. Unmindful of her own peril, she darted after the little one, and succeeded in rescuing him from impending destruction at the moment when the father, who had not been immediately aware of his child's situation, arrived in search of him.

The man overwhelmed Annie with grateful thanks, and entreated her to go in and refresh herself after her great exertions. Glad, indeed, was she to accept the offer, and thankful was she for the cup of tea which the mother of the rescued child gave her. Only then did Annie look round and perceive that she was in a ready-made clothes shop. As the happy parents continued to reiterate their gratitude, it occurred to her that from them she might obtain employment; so when the first emotions of joy had subsided, and they asked if they could be of any use to her, she answered quickly, "Will you give me work? I can do it neatly. But I have no money to leave as a deposit; I am very, very poor!"

"Money!" repeated the man. "Surely,

Miss, we can trust you ! If we can't, who can we trust ?”

Annie left her new acquaintance with a lightened heart, for she carried away with her a bundle of shirts, which she was to make for a small sum indeed—only eight-pence a piece ; but she had heard somewhere of shirts made at three half-pence each, and was therefore inclined to think she had made a very good bargain. Everything in this world must be valued by comparison.

When Annie returned home, her face spoke volumes of joyful intelligence. “Some one has engaged you !” said Ellen.

“No, indeed !” said Annie, but still looking bright.

“You have met some of our dear old people from Merton !”

“No, not that.”

“Well, what is it then ? for I know something very good has happened.”

“Look !” said Annie, triumphantly displaying her bundle.

“What a merciful Providence !” exclaimed Ellen. “I will begin directly.”

The sisters were now becoming familiar with privations. Anxious not to exchange

their lodgings for those that were less respectable, they determined to make their other expenses as small as possible ; but they found that the most rigid economy would not enable them long to subsist, on the produce of their labours as needlewomen. Again and again the question arose, what was to become of them ? Ellen was ever ready to suggest, trust in God ; but Annie, though a firm believer, was not a trusting Christian, and Ellen, though the weakest in all things, was yet the happiest.

One Saturday afternoon Bertha came in to see her friends ; till then she had had no idea that they were distressed. She entreated them to take the few shillings her purse contained, but both steadily refused. Bertha then begged Annie to meet her in the Square Gardens the following Monday morning, as she designed introducing her to a governess friend or acquaintance who was remarkably clever, had been eminently successful herself, and, having a very large connexion among the nobility and gentry, was often enabled to recommend governesses to very distinguished families. Of course, Annie testified her glad acquiescence in any plan which would bring her acquainted with

so influential a person as Miss Hortensia Maynard, and ere Bertha departed, the meeting for Monday morning was agreed on.

Accordingly, Annie rose early on the appointed day, and repaired by seven o'clock to the place of rendezvous. She had been walking some time with Bertha, when a strange-looking little woman entered, attired in a deeply-flounced blue dress, with an air of importance, as if she knew herself to be somebody, and at the same time displaying an affectation of girlish sprightliness. Her countenance was only remarkable for a certain vivacity and quickness in the eyes. Her age was about thirty-seven or eight.

Miss Hortensia Maynard advanced hastily to Bertha, cordially shook her by both hands, and exclaimed—"My dear creature, I am so afflicted to have kept you waiting, so sincerely afflicted, but I am so driven! You can scarcely imagine the business I have on hand; the secretaryship of two societies, you know, and as large a correspondence as the Chancellor of the Exchequer, besides my duties. The last post brought me a charming letter of four sheets from the dear Countess. You know I made her acquaintance at Dover, last year. I had been there

some weeks before I had the least conception that she was in the neighbourhood. We were at church one day, when I happened to observe a lady in the adjoining pew without a hymn-book. I offered her one, little imagining that that trifling circumstance would lay the foundation of an eternal friendship; such, however, has been the case. The Countess called on me, an intimacy sprang up between us. Our minds are so congenial, the Countess has a very cultivated mind—but what was I saying? Oh! speaking of my numerous correspondents. I have so many applications from families requiring governesses, and who beg me to interest myself in their researches; so many from governesses begging me to recommend them. Then the friends of orphans who want to get them into asylums, call on me to use my influence, so that I have scarcely a minute to call my own. Then, in our numerous parties at home, Sir William and Lady S—— always depute me to do the greater part of the honours. I ask whoever I choose, and it often happens that they are uncertain as to the names of the guests assembled in their drawing-rooms.”

Here the little lady thought proper to

take breath, and Bertha seized on the opportunity, lest another should not occur of doing so, of introducing Annie Sherwood. Miss Hortensia warmly protested that she was delighted to make Miss Sherwood's acquaintance, and would be charmed to be of any assistance to her. She had no doubt of being enabled to procure her an engagement, so many friends applied to her, &c. ; in fact, she was "so driven," that she could scarcely breathe. The above is a very brief summary of a very lengthened exordium with which Miss Hortensia favoured her friends, before withdrawing from their company.

"It is very strange," said Bertha, sighing. "The S——s must be very extraordinary people; Hortensia is entirely her own mistress, disposes of her time as she pleases, and may order the carriage at any time in the day! Is it not strange?"

"Passing strange, if it be true," said Annie.

"Certainly it is true."

"Then you don't suspect your friend of any exaggeration?"

"Oh, certainly not," said Bertha. "I have seen her with Lady S——, a quiet, meek, silent woman, who lets Hortensia do all the

talking, and seems to acknowledge her superiority. She is certainly very clever, don't you think so?"

"She talks a great deal," said Annie.

"And talks so well," said Bertha. "Don't you think her clever?"

"Frankly, no!" replied Annie; "judging by the slight specimen I have just had, I think she is one of those people in whom immense self-reliance passes for talent, and (forgive me, Bertha) consummate impudence for genius! But she is——"

"She is very good-hearted," said the crest-fallen Bertha.

"Of that I have no doubt," said Annie, "and I am really obliged to her for her kind promises of assistance to me, as a stranger, not that I have much faith in them."

"I really am surprised!" exclaimed Bertha. "You are the first person I have met with, the very first, who has made the acquaintance of Hortensia, without being fascinated by her. I must acknowledge that she has exercised an immense influence over me."

"Shall I tell you why?" asked Annie. "It is because you have a modest estimate of yourself; such people are always apt to exaggerate the merits and talents of their neigh-

hour. Now, I dare say you never caught yourself admiring one of your own sayings in your life; and consequently, those of your friends, if confidently uttered, appear to you *chefs-d'œuvre* of genius and eloquence! But it is time, dear Bertha, for you to go in, if St. Peter's clock speaks the hour faithfully."

"Oh dear, Annie, I should have been in ten minutes ago! what shall I do?"

"It is accidental, pray don't agitate yourself thus," said Annie, seeing Bertha look quite pale and frightened.

"I can't help it," said she, "indeed I can't. I know it is weak and silly; but if I see a cloud on Mrs. Cheshyre's face, my heart beats violently, like that of a frightened bird."

"I think I should never have such a feeling," said Annie, "if I should ever obtain ingress to one of these 'very distinguished families,' as Mr. de F—— calls them. It is very strange that all my plans have miscarried."

"You must not despair of success, nevertheless," said Bertha. "I have frequently known governesses a year, or even longer, looking out." The friends then parted.

Annie's adventures for the day were not completed. Having occasion to go into the

City to carry home some finished work, she passed through Piccadilly on her return, and was overtaken by her new acquaintance of the morning. Miss Hortensia was lounging in her employer's carriage, and attended by two very amiable, dull-looking youths, her pupils. Miss Hortensia was a learned lady, and taught the embryo lords of creation. The fortunate governess pulled the check-string with an air which implied habitual practice, and when the carriage stopped, insisted on Annie's entering.

From that moment Miss Hortensia opened her fire, and rapidly threw off anecdotes of illustrious and well-known personages, always intermingling some personal adventure, to form a thread on which to string her scattered gems of narrative.

Miss Hortensia suddenly recollected that her friend Lady Mary L—— was in want of a governess; her engagement would do for Miss Sherwood. Yet stay! her ladyship required music. No, that would not do. A charming acquaintance of Miss Hortensia's, well known in the literary and religious world, was just going to bring out a work on education, a work worthy of Locke! she was in want of a companion and amanuensis,

the office was exactly the thing for Miss Sherwood. Yet no ! the person required must be able to write the German character. At length a more feasible plan suggested itself to Miss Hortensia. Her friend (she had so many friends !) the Hon. Mrs. Ernscliff, wanted a boys' governess ; she was sure Miss Sherwood would suit her precisely. Annie smiled. Miss Hortensia translated the smile into intense admiration, surprise, and gratitude, and ere they parted she instructed her new *protégée* (Miss Hortensia did so love to have a *protégée*) to call as early as possible the next morning on the Hon. Mrs. Ernscliff, No. —, ——— Place, ——— Square, and use her name ! that would be a sufficient introduction and recommendation.

Annie Sherwood accordingly called on Mrs. Ernscliff. She found her haughty and assuming. She had indeed some recollection of a person called Mallerd or Manning, or something of the kind, whom she had seen at luncheon at Sir William S——'s, but assuredly she had never commissioned her to look out for a governess for her. This was an age of general assumption, an age in which people seldom knew their own station, but were constantly stepping out of it, and med-

dling with matters which did not concern them. Annie Sherwood thought she had heard enough, and withdrew silently, leaving Mrs. Ernscliff in a fit of aristocratic surprise and high-bred disdain at the impertinent intrusion.

“You have seen my friend Mrs. Ernscliff?” said Miss Hortensia, when next they met.

“I have seen Mrs. Ernscliff,” said Annie, significantly.

“Is she not charming?”

“Very!”

“And you have agreed with her?”

“No, we did not enter on the business.”

“Dear me! Did you tell her that I recommended you?”

“Yes, but she did not recollect your name.”

Miss Hortensia coloured, and changed the conversation.

CHAPTER VIII.

“ANNIE! Annie! how the professions of that Mrs. Harrington deceived me!” exclaimed Ellen, one day. “Do you know I quite relied on her promises. I really did expect she would recommend us, or at least let us know that opportunity rather than inclination had failed her.”

It must be remarked that Ellen was unusually depressed; perhaps some connexion might be traced between her depression, and the fact that for the last six weeks, a particularly rusty hat had ceased to pass by the dim little window just as the clock struck five.

“And for once I, too, believed and trusted,” said Annie, with a sigh; “I have learnt to distrust every one on earth, I am afraid!”

“She had such a sweet, ingenuous countenance,” said Ellen; “after all, perhaps she has not forgotten us wilfully. She did not seem happy, she may have been distracted

with a thousand cares, been ill, or even may be dead!"

"No, no," said Annie, "she is neither ill nor dead, but her momentary sympathy did not survive our visit. Rich people are too much immersed in their pleasures to throw away time or thought on the necessitous. How pale and thin you are growing, darling!" she continued, in a tone of the utmost tenderness, to Ellen; "I scarcely know whether it is with constantly bending over this work, or with insufficient food. Put on your bonnet, and come with me. I must carry these shirts home. Let me see; seven eights are fifty-six; fifty-six pence, four and eightpence! Come, we can afford a mutton-chop for dinner to-morrow; you have not had meat for three days!"

"You have not had any for a week!"

"But I am stronger than you," said Annie, quickly. "Make haste, dear, or Wilson's will be shut."

The two girls set off with their little bundle of work. Ellen's steps were slow and faint, so were those of Annie, though not so much so, for her will was strong in the midst of disappointment and privation;

still, a life of hardship had begun to tell on the physical strength of both.

Any one might have recognised those two pale girls as the children of sorrow, even without a glance at their shabby clothing; for as they passed along the gay streets, neither of them gave a single glance at those they met, nor at the gaudy display of fashion and luxury so alluringly spread forth to attract the feminine gaze—the glittering jewels, the silken robes, the gossamer laces, the flowers so bright and artistic that they might vie with nature; none of these could attract the eyes of the tired seamstresses, the governess candidates. Their path was labour, their goal labour; labour was the echo of their thoughts—their words; the only thing to which they dared aspire was labour: and yet nature had destined them for better things. Keep on with lowly faith, pale sisters; there are better days in store, a brighter dawn to rise for her who endures, unhardened by the fire of affliction. The road you travel is thorny, but its thorns will not be eternal to her who meekly bears the wounds they make, and looks upward for a healing balm.

Annie's employer and patron, Mr. Wilson, was putting up the shutters of his shop, though it was two hours before the regular hour of closing.

"You are very early to-day, Mr. Wilson!" said Annie, as they came up to him. The man made no reply, but looked round with such a ghastly countenance, that it was evident some dreadful misfortune had happened to himself or his family. The Sherwoods passed into the house, then into the back parlour, where the wife was wringing her hands, and the children sat crying on the floor; they did not know why, but they saw their mother cry, so they cried too.

"We are undone! ruined! completely ruined!" was all the poor woman could ejaculate. Annie put down her bundle and sank on a chair, while Ellen, struck dumb with consternation, continued standing.

The scene told its own story—bankruptcy, and one more distressed, despairing family thrown on the world, destitute! Perhaps it was their own fault, perhaps their mismanagement; but Annie and Ellen were not hardened enough in the world's ways to form such reflections, and only saw before them so many objects of sympathy and com-

miseration, entirely forgetting that the ruin they witnessed, involved the annihilation of their own scanty means of subsistence.

It was only when they had left the unfortunate family, that the poor girls remembered they were penniless, that the coming day was Sunday, and that they had not even a loaf of bread in their possession : besides, they owed a fortnight's rent. Again the oft-repeated question, "What was to be done?" Bertha was in the country. "Let us go to the 'Grand Lombard !' " said Annie, trying to smile.

"Impossible, they close at eight," replied Ellen, who had become quite learned in such matters ; then she added, quickly, "Annie, there can be nothing wrong in it ; there will be no one to recognise us in this crowded city—I will sing some ballads, and——"

"Ellen, Ellen, you are mad ! A crowd would gather round us, and you would be insulted !"

"No, no, I should not ; come, let us walk quickly towards home ; there are quiet streets about there,—Sloane Street, for instance, or Hans Place, where we wandered to look at the outside of poor L. E. L.'s house."

"Oh, no, I could never consent to such a

thing," cried Annie, in the utmost agitation. "Your head is wandering, Ellen, or you would not make such a proposition. We must try and find a 'Lombard' still open."

"And if we do, what have we to take there?" said Ellen.

That was indeed putting things in a new light. "We have nothing left!" murmured she; then suddenly Annie said, "My black satin cape."

"It is quite rusty, Annie."

"Your fine cotton stockings!"

"They are covered with darns!"

"Pope's *Homer*, Ellen."

"No, no," said Ellen; "they don't take books, or if they do, only well-bound ones. Come, Annie, consent, let me have an adventure for once. I will just sing three little songs under L. E. L.'s old balcony; if her musical spirit hovers near, it may inspire some generous heart to drop us a shilling."

Full of new-born determination, Ellen hurried on so quickly, that by the time they reached Hans Place she was completely out of breath, and stood still, quite still, pressing her little hands on her heart, which beat at once with fatigue and a wild, startled fear of

her own temerity. Poor Ellen, she was still a child.

The moon had risen high, and cast a melancholy light on that quiet, secluded spot; it shone full into the windows of the house where the maiden poet used to sit in her old high-backed chair, weaving her golden dream of romance, and her wild, fantastic fancies into verse, which had more sweetness than immortality perchance; but yet, though heart-stricken with sorrow and disappointment, she went on singing—

“How many share such destiny!
How many, lured by fancy’s beam,
Ask the impossible to be,
And pine, the victims of a dream!”

And while Ellen tried very hard to gather up the courage necessary for the bold task she had undertaken, and ransacked her brain for scraps of old song, there came a strange thought into Annie’s mind—a sudden light flashed upon her, a joyous gladness thrilled through her frame, so exquisite, it seemed as though it came from an angel’s whisper, and she knew that she was destined for higher things than she had contemplated—knew that she was a poet! And with that revelation came the wild-fire ambition too, and

she dared to dream that she would win fame, that she would snatch at the stars, and weave them into a crown for her head, though that crown should turn to thorns and pierce her brow.

Nothing in life, from the cradle to the grave, nothing save the first rosy dawn of love in the heart, is, or can be so entrancing, as the first consciousness of genius. No, Earth has nothing like it—it is worth an Eternity of meaner joys. Perhaps love itself—divine as is its first throb, perhaps love itself cannot equal it! So thought, or rather so felt, Annie Sherwood, and she stood still, quite still, beneath the window of the departed minstrel, so rapt that she quite forgot all that had happened to her the last dreary months,—all the painful privations, the midnight work and weariness, the useless efforts, the disappointed hopes, and the world's harsh stings; forgot too, what had brought her to that spot, till a few broken, struggling, half-choked notes of "Annie Laurie," from Ellen, roused her to the stern realities of life.

Instinctively Annie snatched Ellen's arm to lead her away, but it was useless, the faint attempt at a song had broken down of itself.

The window of a house near which the two girls stood was open. The light of a chandelier streamed through the transparent curtains; a young girl with a profusion of ringlets flitted past the window; she laughed aloud, and her laugh was not the most musical; then she struck two or three notes of the air which Ellen had attempted, on the piano, exclaiming, in a loud tone, "How ridiculously false her voice is!"

"And she sings through her nose; her voice is cracked, like that of all street musicians," answered a gentleman; and then he laughed, and the young girl laughed too—but poor Ellen did not laugh, she—she cried!

A young man passed by Ellen in the street; he looked like a linendraper's assistant. He paused and looked at her, which made her draw back, but he only wanted to put some halfpence in her hand, and then he went on his way. Meanwhile, Annie walked up to the door of the mockers, and noted the number; she would never forget it; Ellen would.

The song was effectually over; Ellen would have fainted had she yielded to her weakness. A white-haired, benevolent looking old man came up quite close to her.

Ellen thought that he, like the young man, was going to offer her a few pence for her broken song. Hesitatingly she stretched forth her hand; but what was her surprise and terror when the benevolent white-haired old man drew that trembling hand in his arm, and was hurrying her away, she knew not whither, calling her "my dear" and "my love," and talking to her of the beautiful moonlight, and how fair her fair face looked in it!

"I do not know you, sir!" gasped Ellen; "you mistake me for some other person. Pray, pray let me go!"

"Release my sister this instant, sir!" exclaimed Annie, darting after him, "or I will call a policeman and give you in charge."

"And if you commit such an absurdity," said the old man, coolly, "I shall merely tell him that you are an impostor, and that this young person belongs to me. You had better go away quietly," he added, "or you will tempt me to give you in charge as a troublesome vagrant. If you want money, take that"—flinging down a piece of gold—"and begone. Your sister, if she be such, will come to no harm; she could not be safer than under my protection."

So speaking he hurried away, dragging Ellen with him; she had grown speechless from fear, and Annie in vain appealed to the few straggling passers-by. They entered Sloane Street. A private cabriolet, with arms emblazoned, and a fashionable tiger, stood in waiting. The old man would have forced Ellen in, when poor Annie made a desperate appeal for help to a strong-looking man who was passing by. He laughed coarsely, and said something about "spending one's strength on one's own business," then passed on. A slight boyish-looking figure sprang forward, and hastily dropping a parcel of books which he held by a leather strap, collared the benevolent white-haired individual resolutely, and forced him to release Ellen. The old man would have struggled to regain his prize, but his young antagonist was too much for him, and after inflicting several well-aimed blows on the delinquent, succeeded in tripping him up. "I would advise you to walk on quickly, ladies," said the youth; "this may prove a very unpleasant affair, and it would be painful for you to be brought forward as witnesses."

It seemed that the benevolent old gentle-

man was somewhat stunned by his fall. The tiger, who had kept aloof while the combat lasted, despite his master's calls for assistance, now came to help him to rise, while the young knight-errant stood still, with his arms folded composedly, and his lips curled into a scornful smile. When the benevolent old gentleman was fairly on his feet again, his chastiser handed him a card, saying, "If you wish to hear more from me, there is my name and address." Then, with a bow of mock ceremony, he turned away, while his adversary struck the air in a vain attempt to reach him with a whip which he had snatched from the tiger's hand.

The youth stooped, picked up his books with a great deal of *sang-froid*, and whistling *Il segreto per esser felice*, passed on. Designedly or otherwise, he soon overtook the sisters. Annie immediately recognised him, and though anxious to lead the trembling Ellen home as speedily as possible, she could not resist stopping to offer a word of gratitude to their youthful preserver.

"Do not mention the trifling service I have rendered you," replied the boy. "I assure you that your satisfaction at your escape from impertinence, cannot equal mine

at having been privileged to rescue you. I have just been reading Froissart's *Chronicles*. The tales of chivalry inspire me with emulation. Have you read Froissart? If not, pray do. Good night; I am so very glad to have rescued you! Pray read Froissart." So saying, the chivalrous youth raised his hat, and bowing with a grace that might have done honour to Sir Walter Manny, turned down a street and was lost to sight.

At any other moment, the ludicrous part of the foregoing scene would have so far prevailed as to draw from both sisters uncontrollable fits of laughter; but as it was, both were too painfully pre-occupied to admit of merriment. In silent sorrow they pursued their way with slow uncertain steps, and when they entered their humble dwelling both sank faint and exhausted, on the first chairs they found. "Shall I bring in tea and a candle, ma'am?" asked the landlady. "No, thank you," replied Annie, "we have had—I mean we do not want tea. We have nothing to do; the moon will light us to bed." "Yes, let us go to bed!" said Ellen: so they went, with their arms laced round each other, those two pale sisters, up to their

little chamber, faint from want of food, yet more faint from weariness of heart.

Pause, reader ! luxurious reader, whose eye perchance idly skims these pages, while your form reposes on the couch of ease and luxury, and think—ay, take the thought to your heart, and ponder it there—think that there is hunger, yes, actual starvation, if you could, nay, if you *would*, hunt it out, unheralded by the beggar's garb, unproclaimed by his whining plaint.

Annie Sherwood was going to throw herself on her bed, but Ellen fondly, gently drew her on her knees, whispering “ God is a very present help in time of trouble ; He feedeth the young ravens that call upon Him ! ”

Happy, Annie, had that guileless, child-like monitor always been near to whisper of heaven !—the weak to speak wisdom to the strong ! the humble spirit to counsel the proud-hearted !—but thus it might not be.

The sisters were silently kneeling in prayer, hand clasped in hand, when they were suddenly startled by a loud, thundering knock at the door. Neither stirred, though each fluttering heart whispered “ It may be for us ! it may be help ! ” Yet, humanly speaking, they had no foundation for such a sup-

position : whom had they in the whole world to meet them with the succour they had never solicited ?

“A letter for Miss Sherwood, an unstamped letter—two-pence to pay,” said the landlady.

“I have no money—no change, I mean,” said Annie, quickly.

“Never mind, ma’am, I can pay him,” said the civil landlady.

Annie seized the letter, and darting to the window, hastily broke the seal. “Gracious Heaven! from whom can this come?” she exclaimed, as a bank-note fell in her lap. “From our Heavenly Father,” said Ellen, reverently; “an answer, oh, how speedy an answer, to the prayer, ‘Give us this day our daily bread!’”

“But some one must have sent it,” persisted Annie; “we are past the age of miracles.” “Here is a solution,” said Ellen, picking up the fallen envelope, on the edge of which she read by the aid of the moonlight, “He feedeth the young ravens that call upon him.” “Your own favourite text!” exclaimed Annie; “most wonderful!”

The note was only one for 5*l.*, but that seemed to the sisters, in their present circumstances, an inexhaustible mine of wealth.

It was long ere the poor girls remembered again that they were hungry ; when they did so, it was too late to procure anything, and the morrow was Sunday. “ I will tell Mrs. Stevens that we have no change, only a bank-note, (oh, sound of unaccustomed splendour !) and ask her to spare us some bread and tea, for to-morrow’s use,” said Annie, sighing, not with sorrow, but an oppression of happiness.

The landlady not only granted their request, but also pressingly invited them to join her at supper, which they did gladly enough ; and while Ellen exerted herself with her usual amiability to return the kindness of their humble hostess by endeavouring to entertain her, Annie went on with a dream that had been rudely interrupted : sometimes the vision was dark as the thundercloud, but sometimes the bright gleam of ambitious thought flashed through, and lit her face with such a sudden glow of inspiration and happiness, that her sister gazed on her with fond exultation, and wondered that every one did not think Annie beautiful ! And then Ellen answered her own wonder by, “ It is because they don’t know what the beautiful means ! the fault is in their own souls !

some mirrors are so coarse and dim that they reflect nothing truly !”

Annie was in that moment stringing together her first random gems of song; unpolished indeed they were, but their freshness and native glory dazzled herself, and filled her with proud joy. Yet she said nothing of what was passing in her mind or heart; if she had, Ellen would have marvelled much—would have been, if possible, yet prouder of her than she was at present, but she would not quite have understood her.

The disagreeable adventure with the benevolent old gentleman had ceased to ruffle the girls, and they could now thoroughly enjoy the remembrance of “Sir Walter Manny,” as they called their young champion. They had both already made acquaintance with Froissart, but each promised another reading in remembrance of the hero, who only seemed fit to assume the black-patch and to figure in the court of Queen Philippa, or “to strike a sparkle of fine love” in the snowy bosom of one of her maidens.

“What have you done with the envelope of this mysterious letter?” said Annie, when they had retired to their own precincts.

“Here it is,” said Ellen; and added, hesitatingly, “if you don’t mind, dear, I should so like to keep it!”

“Oh no, I don’t mind it at all,” said Annie, smiling; “I see you set a high value on the precious document. My only fear is that you should apply it to superstitious purposes, wear it as a charm, or——”

“Not as a charm,” said Ellen, “but as a token, to ‘call to remembrance that He who clothes the grass of the field, will watch over His children for ever. Oh, Annie, let us never forget this night!” and Ellen sank to rest murmuring, “He feedeth the young ravens when they call upon him.”

CHAPTER IX.

THE following day, Sunday, was indeed one of deep, heartfelt thankfulness! Annie and Ellen were frequently lost in conjecturing who their unknown friend and benefactor might be, but the manner in which the gift was conveyed, the few solemn words which accompanied it, directing the recipient's thanks to the gracious Providence which orders all things, precluded any hesitation as to the propriety of employing it in the way the generous donor had intended. No, there could be no shame in accepting such an offering, so made, and both Annie and Ellen registered a promise, that if ever the day of prosperity came, the heaven-directed bounty they had just received should be returned sevenfold to the suffering children of earth.

Monday brought with it another surprise: surprises, like trials, seldom come alone. About mid-day, a plain, neat carriage drove up to the door, and a soft, gentle voice was

heard inquiring for Ellen; and while the two girls wondered where they had heard that voice before, Mrs. Harrington entered, looking very pale, and clad in deep mourning; one of her fair children she held by her hand, the other, the fairest, brightest, and best, was sleeping in the graveyard. The Reaper had passed by, and had been content to take none but the scarce opened bud. Poor mother! her grief was desolating, but not loud; deep, not wild; the stream that flows on silently and for ever, not the thundershower which exhausts itself.

In the midst of her bereavement, Mrs. Harrington had remembered the trials and wants of others, and reproached herself for not remembering them earlier. She spoke not much of her own loss, only mentioning it as a reason for her seeming negligence, but inquired kindly if Ellen had met with an engagement, or if she had anything in prospect; "for if you have," added she, hastily, "I shall not propose to you what otherwise might be acceptable.

On Ellen's telling her that she had not at present the most distant prospect of employment, Mrs. Harrington resumed, but without the alacrity of a person who feels that

they are conferring a real benefit. "A relative of mine, indeed a half-sister, has commissioned me to procure a governess for her two little girls, and I thought that unless something better offered, you would perhaps like to try Elmgrove. Mind, I only say to try, for it might prove altogether distasteful to you."

"I am sure, quite sure, that I must be happy with a relation of yours," said Ellen; "a sister, too!"

"But I am not quite so sure," said Mrs. Harrington, with a sad but sweet smile; "every situation in life has its trials, as every heart has its sorrows. I must tell you, however, something of my sister's family. Mr. Ferrers is many years her senior; taciturn and reserved, you might consider him haughty, but on the whole he is well-intentioned and kind-hearted. He has three grown-up daughters (two of whom must be several years older than you,) by his first wife. Perhaps you would find your position with regard to them rather trying. I am not sure. They are considered amiable and agreeable; one is pious, and I believe they are all clever and accomplished. Your two little charges that are

to be, have never been broken in, and are consequently rather wild. I am afraid they come under the class of spoilt children; but if they should be troublesome at first, you will bring them round no doubt by kindness. I must tell you beforehand that you must not expect much assistance in the way of training from their mamma, who is a sort of nervous invalid, and almost wholly confined to the sofa. The remuneration offered will not, I fear, be adequate to the amount of labour required, but my sister promises that the stipend shall be increased the second year."

Ellen, all beaming gratitude and delight, never once thought of inquiring what salary might be given by Mrs. Ferrers; she was ready to accept anything, to promise anything, to do anything. Annie, however, ventured to inquire what sum Ellen would receive yearly. Mrs. Harrington coloured as she replied, "Twenty pounds;" she was ashamed of the sum offered to an educated gentlewoman. The smallness of the salary did not shock either Annie or Ellen; they remembered an offer of twelve! but Mrs. Harrington, who knew her brother-in-law's income was above 7000*l.* per annum, was ashamed of what her

own generous spirit taught her to consider a mean transaction.

Ellen would be required to go to her new home and her untried duties immediately, at least, within a week. "But my poor dear Annie!" exclaimed Ellen; "she will be left quite alone! What can she do?" And she spoke in a tone of the utmost dismay. "We have never before been separated for a single day!" said Annie, while she tenderly wiped her sister's tears. And though Mrs. Harrington had been brought up in the world's ways, and knew well the world's thoughts, she had not enough of that world in her own heart to sneer or mock at the feelings of the unsophisticated.

Before leaving the Sherwoods, Mrs. Harrington gave Ellen an advance of her first quarter's salary, ostensibly to meet her travelling expenses, but in reality she saw how much the rusty black of her *protégée* needed renewing, and how little chance there would be of her meeting with any consideration, should she present herself at Elmgrove as she then was, wearing the certain insignia of a decayed gentlewoman!

Ellen would fain have deferred the hour of departure, not from any dread of coming

hardships—for it seemed to her an utter impossibility that she could meet with anything painful among those so nearly connected with Mrs. Harrington—but she dreaded leaving Annie in her solitude; yet more she would have feared the coming separation could she have foreseen that her departure would be to her sister like the last sad farewell of a holy spirit that had formed a link between her and Heaven. True it was of those sisters, that the strong intellect, the resolved will of the one, learned all they ever knew of high and holy things from the weaker, frailer one, ignorant of the world's ways, but full of divine thoughts and feelings. Yes, when Ellen went forth, it appeared that poor Annie's good angel went forth too, and left her generous but erring heart to struggle on in darkness with the iron world and its oppressions!

But yet a few days remained to the sisters, ere the younger and the well loved should take on her the yoke of bondage in the house of the stranger. Yes, bondage it is, however much we may disguise it to ourselves, when we barter, not our talents and attainments, not our intellectual strength alone, but our thoughts, words, looks, our

very gestures, for the bitter bread of dependence; for, do thoughts, words, looks, or gestures remain free? No; they must be shaped to please our patrons.

Talk not of the pale seamstress in the close, unwholesome garret, toiling far into the night for her wretched pittance! True, she struggles, struggles piteously, till the heart groans over the contemplation; but she has one happiness. She may labour sometimes unobserved—*unwatched*! She is alone—alone with Him that made her; and the full heart, full even to bursting, may spread out its griefs before His eye, unmarked—pour forth the passionate complaint unchecked and unreprieved. Or, she labours among her equals: all suffer, all fare alike, all bear the same burden; there is no startling contrast near, to make her compare her lot with others.

But go to that luxurious mansion, that rears its palatial front like the dwelling of a king. Let the polished door be thrown back on its hinges. Tread through yon costly marble hall, with its statues and busts, its gilded doors, its crimson draperies—tread up that noble staircase, whereon the foot sinks, noiseless as a snow-flake, in the soft

pile of the velvet-like carpets. Stop before that gorgeous window, catch through its open valves the breath of the rare flowers, children of the south, transplanted hither as much for the rich man's pride as for his pleasure. See, the doors are half unclosed: as you go up the staircase you can catch a glimpse of the luxurious suite of drawing-rooms,—the gilded, satin-covered couches and chairs,—the chandeliers, glittering like the spray falling from a sunny fountain,—the rich inlaid cabinets,—the books, so encased that they seem only fit for royal hands,—the musical instruments, whose tones thrill through the soul like enchantment! Pass on upwards. Those are the sleeping chambers of the rich, with their downy beds, their sheets fine as if from fairy looms, their velvet hangings, their toilets covered with lace, and adorned with mirrors that would make deformity itself look beautiful. Pass on; you have gazed enough on the cushions, on which men forget their mortality. Up, higher still. The next suite of rooms will dazzle your eye much less; but onward, onward. Are you wearied now? Do the steep stairs (they are only just beginning to be steep),—do they tire you?

Are they slippery, now that the costly carpet no longer hushes your foot-fall? Do you shiver coming from the warm atmosphere below? Do those dingy walls, with their dark, mouldy papers, chill you, after the warm life-glow you have just left? But pass on, there is more to see. There, enter that prison-like chamber. You see that dirty bed, with the soiled, rusty, torn hangings—that dingy window, foul with the accumulated dust of months, and the soot of the neighbouring chimneys? You see that table, with its dim, cracked looking-glass? Ah! you are looking at the toilet cover! You are wrong; that is not one, it is only a discoloured piece of calico, the remnant of some garment, spread, in a vain attempt, to hide the unsightly article it but partially covers. You noted the marble bath-room as you came up-stairs? Now, look at that old wash-hand stand, with its worn-off paint, its cracked pottery of odd, discordant patterns. Have you seen enough? Must you tread on that narrow strip of threadbare carpet beside the bed?—it will not cheat you into the belief of comfort.

Ah! you need not look round in the cold evening for a little friendly blaze to throw

its ruddy glow of cheerfulness around and teach desolation to smile. There is no fire-place ; but why should there be one to mock the sight ? Fuel for that chamber would be too expensive ; the owners of the mansion have a limited income—only 12,000*l.* a-year !

I will not tell you who sleeps in that chamber at the top of the house ; who kneels there at midnight, and cries in a voice of choking agony, “Eli, Eli, lama sabacthani !” from the heart, if not from the lips. No, I will not tell you who sleeps there ; you know it—of course you know it !

A crucifix hangs on the walls, but the governess is not a Roman Catholic ; no, nor is she a Puseyite ; only she hangs up the symbol of the intensest suffering, that she may look on the climax of agony, realize it, and learn to bear—her own ! *That desolate chamber is the faint picture of her life !*

Is this picture the creation of fancy ? Forbid it, just Heaven, that the mind should be morbid enough to create such images ! No, no ! I that write these pictures have seen with my own eyes what I describe. Shall I say more ? have felt it—all—all ; have sat in such a room, cold, very cold, and lonely ; while ever and anon the sound

of music, and mirth, and revelry came echoing up from the halls beneath, and smote on the solitary heart sadder than the funeral bell at midnight, tolling for a departing soul.

It was while sitting thus, listening to revelry in which I had no share, that a thought came into my mind that there were great, noble souls in the world, that knew nothing of governess life among the rich and great—souls too noble to conceive the image of wrongs that they would never, never inflict; and then the thought came, too, that I would tell them, in plain, simple words, straight from my heart to theirs, a story of wrong that would thrill them!

So it was, reader, that I seized a pen, and sat down to my task, and, to speak truth, that pen was dipped in gall, and the tale it traced was bitter—oh, so bitter, that I turned from it myself in shuddering horror. Then something said to me,—“Not yet, not yet! Patience! it is not yet time; wait a few more winters; a very few, for with such as you, a few years do the work of many; wait till thy heart is older, thy fancy grown more chilly,—then shalt thou be listened to, and thy sober words believed. Reader, I have

waited, and now I speak to the noble hearts that will understand me, (why should I speak to others?) of the realities of governess life, the nude realities, softened as the remembrance is by speaking of the past, that can never more return.

Annie Sherwood was alone ; alone to begin a death struggle. Mrs. Harrington had said kindly, even warmly, "Come and see me, I am much alone, for 'I have not loved the world, nor the world me.' You saw my precious angel boy, though but for a moment : I feel as if I could talk to you of him. Do come, Miss Sherwood."

And Annie, who believed so few people, did believe Mrs. Harrington, and answered, with grateful smiles, that she would come.

Mrs. Harrington had the misfortune to be united to a man whose gross nature knew no other law than his own will, and whose habitual fickleness of temper perpetually led him in pursuit of fresh objects of guilty passion. Virtuous ladies and worldly-wise friends had coldly lectured the unhappy wife on the necessity of a legal separation from her unprincipled husband ; but she had always answered, "He is the father of my children ; I loved him, and he loved me,

when his soul was pure. Who knows but that Heaven will give me back his heart some blessed day! I will abide the time, and pray—loving him still, for the past!”

So had she gone on, hoping against hope, with meek endurance and never-ending patience; but the happy day she had spoken of came not, and the clouds gathered darker and darker in her gloomy sky, till she began to murmur, “How long!” but she checked the impatient thought almost as soon as it rose, and went on her path with even more saintly patience than before.

Mrs. Harrington was not naturally what we call a jealous wife, but she could not be expected voluntarily to draw persons round her, whose charms might serve as a ready lure to her wandering lord; but looking on Annie Sherwood as people generally looked, and seeing nothing beneath the surface of an ordinary set of features, she mentally decided that there could be no danger to be apprehended in such a person.

It did not occur to Mrs. Harrington, good and amiable as she was herself, to weigh whether Annie Sherwood had principle and virtue to withstand the seductive fascination which she was accustomed to attribute to

her husband. She only thought, "She is plain; Charles will never notice her!" and she had so long denied herself the solace of female society, from the fear of meeting rivals in women whose beauty she was accustomed to exaggerate, that she gladly seized on the occasion of procuring an occasional interchange of thought with an agreeable and cultivated person, whose society she might enjoy, without the attendance of disquieting apprehensions as to the result.

Thus invited, and even pressed, poor Annie went forth from her solitude to spend an evening in the house of her opulent friend, in whom she gladly acknowledged her sister's benefactress. Annie was attired with neat simplicity—in fact, with the best her impoverished wardrobe afforded; a plain white muslin skirt, and a close-fitting black silk jacket, surmounted by a lace ruff, which was becoming, though not quite *à la mode*—L. E. L. wore such a ruff.

Mrs. Harrington received her guest with gentle cordiality. She was alone, but in a few minutes the children came in, and, gathering round Annie, soon grew friendly and communicative. In Mrs. Harrington there was not a shade of haughtiness—no

pride of birth, fortune, or position; still better, there was none of that vulgar condescension which is more intolerable than oppression itself: she made her guest her equal, and made her happy.

And then, she had good accounts to give of Ellen (who had as yet only been able to write briefly of her safe arrival at Elmgrove); she could say that the young governess had made a most favourable impression on Mrs. Harrington's sister,—indeed, on the whole family; that she was well, and certainly very happy.

So the delight of her kind reception, and the much greater delight of such good news, filled Annie Sherwood's heart with a joy that coloured her cheeks brilliantly, and her eyes became radiant as they were wont to do, when she experienced sudden emotion. Her hostess looked as if she could not recognise her; started, and wondered how she could ever have thought her plain; and then the door opened, and Mr. Harrington walked in, yawning. He was going to spend an evening at home, a very rare occurrence; but even the novelty of the circumstance could not preserve him from *ennui*, and he was tired by anticipation.

Mrs. Harrington went through the form of introduction. Annie's momentary brightness had passed away—she was again the plain Annie Sherwood. Mr. Harrington glanced at her, and slightly bowed. He seemed to divine that she was an insignificant person; once more he yawned: he sat down to read *Bentley's Miscellany*.

Mr. Harrington was tall; he had been handsome, but his countenance was disfigured by an expression of disgust and premature satiety. He seemed to have exhausted pleasure, without having attained philosophy, and to be dying for want of a new sensation. He was reclining in an easy chair, and soon dropped asleep over his book. Mrs. Harrington looked very much ashamed, but wisely said nothing. If she could not speak approvingly of her husband, she would not have uttered a censure on him, even to her own mother.

Mrs. Harrington and Annie continued conversing, but in a lower tone. "My husband is very tired," said the former, at length; "he has been riding some distance,"—for she had observed Annie glance at the sleeper. A few minutes later a peculiar tone of Annie's musical voice roused Mr. Harrington

momentarily ; he opened his eyes, glanced at her, then turned away, and composed himself again to sleep, as if regardless of her existence. Soon after, a thunder-storm came on ; the rain beat fearfully against the windows, defying even the closed shutters and the thick draperies to exclude the threatening sound. Annie listened in dismay. “ Don’t be alarmed,” said Mrs. Harrington, who was herself extremely nervous. “ Thank you, I am not at all so,” said Annie, quietly ; “ I was only thinking of my walk home.”

“ You must not attempt it ; you must stay all night,” said Mrs. Harrington. Her husband said nothing (he was awake, because it thundered): he was never commonly civil to a woman, unless he thought her handsome.

Constrained by her kind hostess, Annie consented to remain. She was disgusted by Mr. Harrington’s ill-breeding, but it was of too negative a kind to call forth strong resentment, and perhaps rather amused her fancy than touched her pride. She was speculating on how she would have been entertained had she been a beauty! Perhaps had Mr. Harrington been worth the trouble—had his wife been less an angel, Annie Sherwood would have exerted her conscious

powers, and proved to him that she could be charming, for the mere triumph of deriding the attentions paid to the enchantress, though politeness was denied to the woman.

The room which Annie occupied was next to that of her host and hostess. She did not listen; she was too proud to commit such a mean action; but she could not avoid overhearing their conversation,—at least, all that Mr. Harrington said, for his wife always spoke in subdued tones.

The first words Annie heard were these,—“A governess! pray where did you pick up such an elegant acquaintance?” The answer was not audible. Mr. Harrington went on: “A complete dowdy; ugly as my grandmother in her best tabinet. I tell you what, Carry, if you think of engaging her, you’ll give her a hint to keep her ugly face within her own precincts: never to put it in my way!”

Annie laughed; she was not angry. The coarse rudeness of Mr. Harrington had no barb; it might tease and scratch the surface, but it could not reach the quick. It required a more subtle spirit than his to make Annie Sherwood writhe. Annie went to bed, and slept; moreover, she dreamt

pleasantly. She saw her best-loved Ellen happy under the protecting care of a loving and loved husband; and, behold, when she saw the face of her new brother-in-law, it wore the aspect of the young clergyman she had met at the agent's, and he bent an earnest gaze of reproof upon her; but he looked upon Ellen with such tenderness, with such an air of protecting solicitude, that Annie felt inexpressibly happy. And it appeared to her that for long she watched the beautiful pair wandering through a fair garden, that might have been Paradise, and they seemed like the first created, and from Ellen's gentle eyes was spoken—

“God is thy law, thou mine!”

Just then Annie woke, and behold it was but a dream, though passing pleasant, and her sister Ellen was the poor governess, not the cherished bride!

Annie breakfasted with Mrs. Harrington in her dressing-room. In the course of conversation she mentioned Bertha Somerton, and her unfortunate position at Mrs. Cheshyre's. “Would she do for me?” said Mrs. Harrington, quickly; then as quickly she asked a number of questions, more tending to elicit a personal description of

Bertha, than any account of her accomplishments or acquirements. It was finally resolved that Annie should bring Bertha to Mrs. Harrington's on her next half holiday, and that if the interview should prove satisfactory, she should give Mrs. Cheshyre notice to provide herself with a successor, for Annie felt quite sure that Bertha would gladly exchange her present bondage, for an engagement with such a patroness as Mrs. Harrington.

While Annie was putting on her bonnet to depart, Mrs. Harrington went down stairs to speak to her husband before he went out for the day. A portrait-painter had just sent home a likeness of their beautiful, lost boy. Mrs. Harrington held up the picture to his gaze ; her soft eyes were veiled with tears, but they looked up to his with such pleading tenderness, that he had been less than man could he have withstood that look. He could not ; he was evidently moved, though perhaps his emotion was only for the moment. He drew his wife towards him, and kissed her cheek. She threw her arms around his neck, and wept happy tears upon his bosom ; but he still held his hat and gloves, and glancing

towards the window, he perceived a pretty, coquettish milliner pass by. He disengaged himself from his wife's arms, and, with a half-muttered excuse, walked out. Mrs. Harrington sank on a chair, covering her face with her hands; the momentary gleam of joy had been rudely dispersed, but she complained not.

She had no reproaches to utter; she would meet him again with gentle patience when he returned; but her heart was broken.

Annie had unavoidably witnessed the scene, and she hesitated to advance and take leave of her hostess, who sat with her fair face bowed down upon her hands.

At last Annie thought she must withdraw or make herself heard; she touched the handle of the door. Mrs. Harrington started up; her cheeks were wet, her lips quivering. She looked up at Annie,—she read her face, speaking the sympathy which respect and delicacy forbade her to utter. Mrs. Harrington had many acquaintances; she had few friends; she wanted friendship in her lonely sorrow. Instinctively she hastened to Annie, and throwing herself into her arms, wept unrestrainedly. Annie said nothing

(what could she say?), but she returned that mute caress with all her heart.

“When shall I tell Miss Somerton that you would be likely to want her?” at length Annie asked.

“Who? What did you say?” asked Mrs. Harrington, abstractedly; then continued, “Oh, yes; Miss Somerton—I remember. I should want her directly,—that is to say, as soon as she can honourably leave. If she is all you describe, she will be a great comfort to me. But how foolish I must seem to you, Miss Sherwood—how excessively childish! I am afraid I shall never lose this nervousness—it is constitutional.”

Annie made no remark; she saw that Mrs. Harrington wished to attribute her recent agitation to any other cause than the real one, and she could not condemn her for seeking to veil the errors of her still-beloved, though unworthy husband.

Annie hastened to Bertha, to convey to her the gladdings of her probable engagement in Mrs. Harrington’s family. Bertha could not venture on so bold a step as inviting Annie upstairs, as Mrs. Cheshyre happened to be in the way; so the pleasant

communication must be deferred till the friends could meet in the E—— Square Gardens the following morning.

As impatient to tell her news as Bertha would have been to receive it, could she have divined all there was to tell, Annie found herself at the place of rendezvous half an hour before the various parties of governesses and nurses would appear with their keys and their charges.

Impatiently enough Annie walked up and down; and the only thing that could reconcile her to the delay, was the triumphant thought of the ill-used governess being able to give notice to the haughty and overbearing Mrs. Cheshyre. “She will not find another meek-spirited Bertha Somerton to toil so patiently in her service!” she exclaimed. But Annie Sherwood knew little of such labourers, after all! She did not know that there were hundreds—yes, many hundreds—who would seize with avidity on the hard terms Mrs. Cheshyre would offer, and feel themselves very, very fortunate in obtaining even such a home,—humbly, even gratefully, receiving the pittance of their bondage. “Poor-spirited, mean wretches, who deserve their fate!” Annie would have exclaimed.

*And so they would be, did they work for themselves; but, reader! they labour—ay, that is the word that speaks their calling—they labour, it may be, for a white-headed, widowed mother, for a paralytic father, a brother or sister worn by lingering disease, or perhaps for all these! and to those loved ones their slender pittance is existence—I will not say life! I have known one who toiled for an old, blind mother; another, for a *widowed* sister with five helpless children; another, for a *young* sister, too young, too delicate to brave the storms of the world; another, to support a sister too—a sister whose only refuge from governess life had been a lunatic asylum! another—but need I add more?—and these bore indignities from which flesh and blood shrink, beneath which the soul writhes, but they remembered for whom they bore them, and, with woman's tender heroism, bowed down beneath the cross, which woman's strong love had made them take up. Yes, Mrs. Cheshyre's engagement would soon be filled, and joyfully perhaps.*

“Can it be? oh, no, this is too good to be true!” ejaculated Bertha, when she heard the news which Annie brought her.

“Yes, ’tis all true; but pray don’t look so beamingly happy, Bertha,” said Annie,—“pray don’t, or Mrs. Harrington will be afraid of you, thinking you too good-looking. Remember, your business there will be to be as ugly as possible: however, to make up for that, you will have sixty guineas a-year, and, better still, Mrs. Harrington will place you on such a footing in her house, that the footman will not dare to make love to you!”

“Sixty guineas a-year!” ejaculated Bertha, as if in a dream; “sixty guineas a-year, Annie! You surely cannot mean that!” And when she had realised the truth, her first exclamation was, “Oh, how happy mamma will be!”

At the thought of the added comforts she could give her mother, Bertha sobbed like a child.

“Come, come, Bertha,” said Annie Sherwood, “no sentiment.” And yet she was almost as much moved as Bertha herself. “Tell me, who is that common-looking girl with deep-red hair—do you know her?”

“Know her! I might as well boast an acquaintance with her Majesty.”

“But who is she, then?”

“A governess. But here is some one who will tell you all about her.”

Just then a remarkably pretty young Frenchwoman came up, with a group of children. “Emilie Tourville,” said Bertha, by way of introduction.

“Emilie, I want you to tell my friend, Miss Sherwood, who that *rousse Anglaise* is.”

“Not more *rousse Anglaise* than *rousse Française*,” said the French girl, in perfect English, or so slightly tinged with a foreign accent that it was only more charming. “She is of both nations, and an old school-fellow of mine. Her mother is an English lady’s-maid, her father a French groom. Her parents, at once thrifty and ambitious, have succeeded in placing her in a little higher position than their own, and one in which she can gain *nearly as much money as if she were a lady’s-maid*—of course, not quite so much. She is well-educated, though not lady-like, and lives with Lady A——. I do not know her now, for she dislikes intimacy with any one who does not live in a nobleman’s family; besides which, she has probably other reasons for declining to recognise me.”

“Have you seen anything of Hortensia Maynard?” said Bertha to Annie.

“Not since she gave me an introduction to her friend, the Hon. Mrs. Ernscliff,” said Annie, unable to repress a smile.

“Ah, you would not laugh at Hortensia if you knew her as well as I!” said Bertha, gravely.

“Possibly not; but you must admit she is ridiculously pretending.”

“She is odd,” replied Bertha, “but that is because she is so clever. Clever people are always odd.”

“Not always,” said Annie. “My father was not at all odd, and had as much common sense as talent and learning. But in what way do you consider Miss Maynard so clever?”

“She knows Greek and Latin,” said Bertha, “and knows them so well.”

“Excuse my asking, Bertha, how do you know she is such a good classic?”

“I will tell you. The ——s used to keep a tutor conjointly with a governess; he never could succeed in making Reginald —— construe. Hortensia, in the presence of Sir William and Lady ——, took the work out of the tutor’s hands, and succeeded admira-

bly. The sad part of the story is though, that the poor tutor stood by, quite mortified, and finally lost his engagement."

"And who told you the story, Bertha?"

"Hortensia told me."

"And what said the poor tutor? he must have felt very indignant."

"Oh, no, he did not, I assure you; far from it!"

"How can you tell?"

"For the best of reasons, Annie. So far from resenting Hortensia's rivalry, he was very much attached to her, and made her an offer, dictated as much by admiration as affection."

"And she told you?"

"Yes. He carried one of her slippers in his pocket for a fortnight."

"An excellent proof of affection, certainly!" said Annie, laughing. "How old was this Strephon, Bertha?"

"One-and-twenty."

"That accounts for his folly, if the tale be genuine. Miss Maynard is nearly old enough to be his mother. But why did she not accept him?"

"He has not mind enough for Hortensia," said Bertha. "Then only think, Annie, of

the influence, the strong influence she possesses over Lady ——."

"If the influence you ascribe to her really exists, it certainly goes farther to prove her cleverness than all her Greek and Latin, her scholastic triumph over the boy-tutor's head, or her conquest of his heart. It really gives one the conception of 'the magic which the strong mind always exercises over the weak one.' But I am very much inclined to think that poor Miss Maynard's reign is imaginary, and that the apparent obsequiousness of the servants is obtained by heavy fees."

"I am so sorry, so disappointed, that you don't like her!" said Bertha.

"I don't dislike her! indeed I don't," said Annie; "on the contrary, she strikes me as a particularly good-natured person, who, if she would give up conquests when she is past the age of being charming, and consequence, when she is placed in a position which renders it pitiable, might be very pleasant—at least, would not be ridiculous."

CHAPTER X.

“MY own, dear, kind Sister,—Oh, Annie, how dearly I love you! How this separation shows me all that I have lost in leaving you! Sister! mother! friend! all, all in one! But I have no right to murmur. My last was so hurried, that I could not tell you of more than my safe arrival at this delightful place. If you were but with me, I should be so very happy! Now, however, I must comply with your request, and tell you all.

“To begin at the beginning. Listen! but I know you will. I thought my journey long and tedious, and felt as if I had left half of myself behind; and so I had, and the very best half too, Annie! At the station Mrs. Ferrers’ footman met me with a hired conveyance. I liked their not sending their own carriage for me; I should have thought it like the clergyman who offered me twelve pounds a-year, if they had. I fancied the footman rather familiar, and I began to think

uneasily of Bertha's humble admirer (but you say he is not humble). When I reached the house, he offered me his hand to get out of the carriage; and I have since noticed that he assists his mistress and her daughters, in quite a different style. I tried very hard to get up a little dignity, but I felt myself too insignificant for the attempt to succeed.

“Elmgrove is a sweet place. I don't admire the house, which is modern, and not in good taste; but the small park in which it stands is beautiful, and I expect a great many pleasant hours in rambling about it. I felt very nervous indeed, as we drove up to the door; I can't tell you how I trembled. I am sure I was ghostly white. A gentleman, who was standing on the steps, stared very hard at me, but he did not offer me any assistance. Perhaps he saw how frightened I looked, and thought he should frighten me still more if he spoke to me; thus good-nature may sometimes give a person even a rude appearance. Three or four young ladies were looking at me from the windows, but none of them came out. I thought they were perhaps as timid as I was, and afraid of a stranger; but I am

sure there is nothing in me to frighten any one. Do you think there is, Annie?

“How I got through the hall, and reached the drawing-room, I don’t know. There I found Mrs. Ferrers lying on a sofa, with a novel in her hand. I noticed that it was *Corinna*. I was glad to see her reading your favourite book, and she must have a great deal of sensibility, for I saw she had been crying over it; as I went towards her, she was wiping her eyes. She shook hands with me very kindly, and made several inquiries about my journey. Her voice is very sweet, and she is like Mrs. Harrington in the face, but of course a great deal older. After talking to me very kindly for some time, she said that no doubt I should be glad to go and rest; rang, and desired a servant who came, to show me my rooms. First of all I must tell you that Mrs. Ferrers had very considerately said that, at my age, it was desirable that I should continue to improve myself, so she thought it best that for that purpose, I should have the evening to myself in the school-room. Of course I thought so too.

“A school-room and a bed-room adjoining were, I found, allotted to me. The rooms

were not in any order—indeed, were untidy; but then there is such a large family, I dare say the poor servants have a great deal to do. There was no blind at my bed-room window, and as I did not like to give trouble directly in a strange house, I hung my shawl up for that night, and the next day I ventured to ask Mrs. Ferrers about it. She was very sorry, and said she would give strict orders to have it attended to; but either she has forgotten it, or the servants have been very busy, for I have to hang up my shawl every night; perhaps they will think of it presently.—But to return to my first night. I dare say—indeed, I feel sure—they forgot I had been travelling all day, and must want something, but they gave me neither tea nor supper; and I was going to bed really hungry, when I heard a loud bell ringing, and some one say on the staircase, ‘Shall I tell Miss Ellen it is supper-time? perhaps she is busy, and wont notice the bell.’ I quite forgot that at Elmgrove I should not be called Miss Ellen, as at dear old Merton, and walked down stairs. I saw the door of a dining-room standing open, and within, an elegant table was laid for supper. I was just going in, when the foot-

man who had met me at the station stopped me. ‘*Your* supper will be taken up stairs, Miss,’ he said, smiling oddly at another man, who was putting wine on the table. Then his face changed, and he looked sorry, as if he thought he had hurt my feelings, and said, ‘I am afraid you have not had anything, Miss; I’ll just run and tell the school-room maid.’ I ran up stairs as fast as I could, relieved to think I should sup alone, and not have to face so many strangers. A maid brought me up a tray, with bread, cold mutton, and a jug of beer; there was no napkin on the tray. I took some supper, and rang for the remains to be taken away; but as they did not hear me, I went into my bed-room. I looked round that lonely room, and, oh, Annie! dearest, best of sisters, how I missed you! I am ashamed to tell you how many tears I shed; I tried to keep them down, but they would spring up. I felt so very, very lonely! I sat down to read the Bible; but my door closed badly, and the sound of merry voices and laughter came echoing up the stairs, and I was so silly that I cried again, and felt still more lonely.

“The next morning I began my work, and

found my little pupils dear children ; but I fear it will be difficult to teach them, they are so wild. I must try to remember that high spirits are natural to their age. I breakfasted with them in the school-room ; we did the lessons ; then I took them out ; but as they ran away from me, I had great difficulty to get them home in time for luncheon—that is, the family’s luncheon and our dinner.

“ There I saw the three Miss Ferrers for the first time. Miss Ferrers seems about thirty, but is extremely handsome and aristocratic : very fashionably dressed too. Miss Ellen looks older, but is in reality four or five years younger : she has a thoughtful, care-worn face ; is not pretty ; dresses plainly, in a very high gown, and is neat and precise in the extreme. Her sister Sophia is two-and-twenty ; and oh, so pretty, Annie—such a sweet, good-tempered looking girl, with lovely eyes, and hair like *Marmion’s* Constance, threads of living gold ! I so wish you could see her. When I went in, Miss Ellen shook hands with me very kindly ; Miss Ferrers examined me through a glass, till my cheeks grew like crimson ; and Sophia laughed, but I think not in ill-nature.

“ Mr. Ferrers is old, deaf, and notices no one but his wife, to whom he is very attentive. When luncheon was half over, the gentleman I had seen on the steps came in ; he did not once look towards me, or seem to know that there was a stranger present, of which I was very glad, for his staring so much the day before had made me quite nervous. The Ferrers call him ‘ Francis,’ but the servants speak of him as Mr. Vincent. I suppose he is some relation of the family, but I have not heard them say that he is. Miss Ferrers evidently admires and likes him, but he is more attentive to Miss Sophia. He is not nice-looking, and his manners are far from agreeable. He dresses in rough, shaggy clothes, with immense pockets, and, in my mind, there is some connexion between his voice and his coat. Indeed, he is an illustration of the ‘ ruffian style,’ and uses a great deal of slang. Miss Ferrers remarks ‘ How very clever Francis is!’ but I have never heard him talk of anything beyond dogs and horses ; and of them I am so ignorant myself, that I cannot well judge whether what he says on the subject is clever or not ; but I should scarcely think such topics could afford much ground for the display of talent as a

‘ conversationalist,’ to use your favourite Dr. Chalmers’s word.

“ After dinner (to return to my story), I took the children out again; then we returned to lessons till we had tea, at six o’clock, in the school-room. When tea was over, the children began some very noisy play (what a good thing it is that I have a very strong head), and continued it, until they went to be dressed for dessert.

“ I have been at Elmgrove a week; every day is precisely the same—rather fatiguing—but I have a great many comforts. How much better I am situated than poor Bertha! I am sure I ought to be contented. How I wish you had such an engagement! and yet, Annie,—no,—this life would not do for you! Your mind would starve for want of food. You could not bear solitude, absolute solitude, as well as I. ‘The higher the intellectual powers, the more aliment they require,’ our dear father used to say; ‘it is a mistake to suppose great minds suffice to themselves. Rivers may exist on their own sources; but the sea, the great wide sea, asks for tributary streams and receives them.’ No, nice as it is, Elmgrove would not do for you, dear Annie! The Ferrers see a great deal of

company, but I never meet any of their friends except at luncheon. I am not introduced to any one, so that I am not obliged to talk, happily. The only person that takes any notice of me is the old Vicar, who often drops in when I am at dinner. He is very amiable and good-natured ; but his sermons make me think of Mr. Pendexter's, in Longfellow's *Kavanagh*. Mr. Weston is very old, and his old age is not the energetic, eloquent old age of our dear father, who had the majesty of years without their infirmities. I am afraid it is very wrong, but I can't help contrasting Mr. Weston's feeble voice with

‘ *His voice’s manly flow,*’

and his sleepy utterance with our dear one’s

‘ *Thoughts of power.*’

Only think, Annie, Miss Ellen has just come in to say that we shall spend an hour together in improving conversation, every evening. That will be delightful ; she is so very good, and spends hours every day in visiting the sick poor, school, &c. I often wish I were as good. The only thing that I can't understand in her, is the sharp way in which she sometimes speaks to her sisters. Perhaps

it is that she is vexed and sorry to see them without any serious thoughts, and so given up to the world. Then there is always a sort of wordy war going on between her and Mr. Vincent. Sometimes he takes the liberty of calling her 'a Puritan,' when she retorts by some biting sarcasm. Then he laughs, she gets more annoyed, and usually leaves the room, sometimes drawing a comparison between the tares and the wheat, or murmuring 'they that will live godly in Christ must suffer persecution.' Still I am sure she is a very good person, but she often looks unhappy and distressed. She frets a great deal about Mr. Pendexter—Mr. Weston, I mean (somehow the two names have got confused in my head), and says his light burns so dimly that he is leading his people to destruction. At times she talks as papa described the Whitfield preachers, so excitingly that one feels too much carried away, to examine the soundness of her arguments. She wants to see a more awakening preacher in our pulpit; in that I think she is right, but Mr. Pendex—Mr. Weston—should be dealt tenderly with. She talks to him of the necessity of taking a young, energetic curate, and particularly recommends a clergyman whom she met at the

sea-side last year. Mr. Weston fears his holding what he calls exaggerated views, and though he is willing to take a curate, as he begins to feel his own infirmities, he very naturally likes to have one of his own choosing, rather than of his friends' selection. He has been to town and seen a Mr. Newingham, who pleases him very much, but Miss Ellen says she is sure he is a Puseyite, and will preach in the alb. I should not much care what he preached in, provided he taught us the truth, but she makes herself positively unhappy lest he should wear what the Puritans called 'Aaronic garments;' though we really don't know whether he is coming or not. One minute she exclaims 'we are in heathen darkness, and if he brings us light, it will be that of a firebrand, consuming, not warming the dying branches! He will arrive armed with No. 90, and will know nothing among us but hagioscopes and lecterns, piscinas and credence tables! It is horrible to contemplate!'

"'But how can you know all this?' asked Miss Ferrers, rather scornfully. 'By my presentiments,' her sister replied, with solemnity; 'I see it all as if it had been revealed to me. If Mr. Weston had listened to me,

and secured Mr. Wilson, the dark clouds so ominously gathering over his flock, would have spread their sable pall elsewhere; but we are a doomed people. Still—still there is among us an election of grace!

“But now, my dearest Annie, I must say good-bye. I was going to add you will be weary of this long, rambling epistle, but you will not, no, I am sure you will not.

Your own ELLEN.”

CHAPTER XI.

WHEN Annie had read Ellen's letter, her first impulse was to seize a pen, write, and tell her to return immediately, for she felt assured, even from the few hints of negligence of her comfort contained in her sister's simple narrative, that she could not be happy at Elmgrove. But then Annie exclaimed, "But to what shall I bid her return—to starvation? There she has at least food, except," she added, bitterly, "when they forget to give her her meals. My poor Ellen! I see what they are, but (as she would say herself) it might be worse! She might be with people who would work her to death, or goad her gentle temper into harshness—it might be, break her heart. Well, she must stay for the present, she must stay and listen to Ellen Ferrers' fanatic raving, and Mr. Vincent's veterinary lectures! The one will not make her a visionary, the other will fail in teaching her farrier lore. Oh, my sister! my sweet, in-

nocent Ellen ! how meekly she takes everything ! with what angelic patience she bears indignities that would gall and sting me unendurably !” Annie sat an hour longer quite lost in thought, in the solitude of the little chamber, and night shadows gathered round her. She dismissed all thought of the teacher’s sordid cares, and of her own prospects as far as they were concerned. She bent her mind wholly on one subject, the formation of a poem, a poem which she dreamt would win her fame ; and while her heart was glowing, and her very soul seemed uncontrollable, she seized the pen with which she had been about to address her sister, and only then became conscious that she was sitting in the dark. With a sigh of disappointment, poor Annie groped her way down the dark, narrow staircase into the landlady’s kitchen. On her road thither she had time to reflect that she possibly mistook enthusiasm for genius, and memory for inspiration ! The sickening doubt fell cold and chill on her heart. The landlady, a mass of bombazine and collar, broke harshly on her reverie with a very homely remark. “Do you know, Miss Sherwood, that *mackril* you bought this evening wasn’t fresh, not

a bit of it? Whenever fish is cried about the streets nights, I always suspects 'em; but I've cleaned it, and put a bit of salt and pepper in," &c.

Annie laughed heartily, for she had a keen sense of the ridiculous, but her poetical ideas were effectually put to flight. A minute later she was in her room, pen in hand, trying to recal her scattered thoughts. A beautiful simile had occurred to her in illustration of the theme she had chosen. She looked up, as one is wont to do in a moment of inspiration that comes over the soul, like a thing too bright to be of earth—she looked up, not at the student's midnight lamp, with its classical memories and associations, but at a tallow-candle, which having been neglected, had guttered, and half filled the candlestick! "One of poverty's vulgar realities!" thought Annie; but the beautiful simile was lost!

Annie's mind had not yet acquired hardness enough to grasp and hold its own conceptions; they were like the bright things we see in dreams, presented before her but to be snatched away and irrevocably lost. Between the landlady's fish and the unfortunate tallow-candle, her lovely visions

were entombed, perchance to rise no more. And into what an ungenial grave the plan of an elaborate poem and a profusion of ornaments had fallen! To the surface rose, after a deep search, the following *décousu* lines, which poor Annie in vain sought to connect, or reconcile with each other:—

“ My peace on earth, my hope of Heaven,
I tell thee all—yea, all were given!
And more—if more had been my own—
Upon that die I would have thrown!
Wild the ambition; but the prize,
To me, ’twas more than paradise!

* * * *

Yea, call it madness—what thou wilt,
None more than I discerns my guilt;
Yet one wild thought can still subdue,
And bend, as man could never do!

* * * *

Oh, give me but once more to feel,
In this strong grasp, the unerring steel!
Give me the steed that knows the frame
He bore so oft, through flood and flame!
Whose light foot spurns the sandy plain;
I shall be all I was, again.
Give me the desert wild and free,
And with it, life—and liberty!”

And here the elaborate poem began and ended. At first, when she had scrawled these lines, Annie really thought them poetry. She read them over two or three times, and decided that they looked like an

imitation, and a very bad imitation, of "The Giaour." Then she tried something else, in which the following occurred:—

"Across his large stag eye 'twould fling
The shadow of past suffering."

But immediately she recollected a similar expression in Lady M. W. Montagu's translation from the Turkish.

"Your large stag eyes, where thousand glories play."

Ah! she was an unconscious plagiarist! and so poor Anne Sherwood went to bed with the uncomfortable conviction that she had been deceived in supposing herself a poet, and that she had just 2*l.* 18*s.*, on which to exist until Ellen's first quarter should become due, and Ellen had been but a small portion of that quarter in the enviable post of governess, or more properly speaking, bear-leader to the tractable scions of the Ferrers family. Annie determined to attempt no more poetry. As well might a heart full of love's divinest feelings promise that it will hide for ever in its depth the welling affections that will rise and overflow, in spite of the sternest, strongest efforts to check and seal them down. No, be it the emanation of genius, or merely the

effervescence of fancy, the song conceived in the heart must spring forth, though it be but to meet neglect or ridicule. Apart from the puerilities of vanity, there is in some hearts a *besoin de chanter*, as in others a *besoin d'aimer*, and few imaginative people but remember, when their fancy was young and warm, how they planned immortal poems that were to die of chilling neglect, or rushed to the press with matter sufficiently absurd to excite their own ridicule in after hours of calm reason. Ah ! how a young author is met with a dangerous pæan of applause, or a harshness of satire, altogether disproportioned to his feeble efforts ! How we should mock at the madman pointing a cannon at a wren, but no one sees the absurdity of the critic gunner who directs a broadside at the trembling ambition of the harmless sonneteer, who is probably frightened sufficiently by the uncouth echo of his tinkling rhymes.

Annie Sherwood's dreams were troubled that night, as Mr. Churchill's might have been while planning and re-planning scenes in his long contemplated, but never executed romance.

In solitude and frequent sadness, time

rolled on for Annie Sherwood. When Ellen remitted to her the whole of her quarter's salary, except a few shillings, Annie was still *unplacée*—still looking out for employment, which appeared to fly from her.

Some few events had happened in her little world. Bertha was rejoicing in the comforts of Mrs. Harrington's house, and overwhelmed Annie with thanks for having procured her such a haven of rest. She was the more grateful for her success, as Mrs. Cheshyre, in a fit of aristocratic indignation at the poor girl's having dared to quit her service—(yes, it *was* service, and very hard service too)—had refused to give her any testimonial for four years' conscientious discharge of arduous, heart-depressing duties, and Mrs. Harrington had received Bertha on Annie's simple recommendation.

In the fulness of her grateful heart, Bertha would have forced a large part of her newly acquired riches on her friend, but Annie steadily refused to receive anything from one who had higher duties to perform than relieving her necessities.

Many were Annie Sherwood's privations during the first three months of Ellen's residence at Elmgrove; but she concealed

all she suffered, and even suppressed any comments of a painful nature on Ellen's letters, many of which detailed instances of mortifying neglect, or of still more active unkindness, on the part of those with whom she dwelt. And Ellen often told these things so simply, so artlessly, that it seemed she did not appreciate their meaning, was too humble-minded to resent them, or too patient to feel the useless indignation they were calculated to excite.

But while Annie forcibly restrained the expression of her feelings, from the immeasurable love she bore her sister, the iron entered into her soul, and she viewed her own future with increasing bitterness—mankind with something approaching misanthropy.

Reader, the humble delineator of this character should perhaps claim your forgiveness for attempting to invest your sympathies in a heroine full of faults, instead of craving your kind interest for the angelic creature of spotless perfection usually drawn by romance writers—an embodiment of what woman might have been, had our first Mother never sinned! a being who goes through fiery trials, and comes forth purer

than the refiner's gold! Reader, such characters are not living! You know they are not while you read of them; and my heroine is not the child of imagination, whom I might at pleasure invest with unnatural perfections. No, she is a real, living, erring child of humanity, who set out in life with some, nay, with many, noble aspirations and generous passions, whom wrong, inflicted on herself, and a yet dearer self, drove into a thorny path of error, which a less proud spirit would have avoided at the expense of a crushed and broken heart. I have chosen this defective character to show the working of an oppressive, a cruel system on one subject to the frailties of humanity. An angelic model would be useless! and when she who sat for the portrait failed, or rather when I failed in drawing the likeness, I have followed Sir Philip Sydney's advice, "Look into thine own heart, and write!" When the thread of my narrative broke, I have stirred the records of my memory for scenes which I have at least witnessed—in some of which I have acted.

To return from a digression. Annie had met with two or three events. Not only

the all-important one of having placed Bertha—the kind, gentle, forgiving Bertha—in a happier position, but she had, despite her resolution of renouncing poetry, actually written a poem, and was simple enough to believe she would find a publisher! Sad, indeed bitter, was her disappointment when they civilly told her that these were not the days of poetry, and tried to talk her into the belief that railroad times annihilated the sense of the divine and beautiful! One, to whom she tremblingly presented her MS., had the candour to acknowledge that there was merit in the performance—fancy and feeling; but he advised Annie not to publish. Poor aspirant! hopeless, but struggling on; how she turned back, day after day, with wearied steps, and a more wearied brain, after long walks between governess institutions and booksellers' shops, in all of which she seemed doomed to meet disappointment.

One day, however, came an order from a scholastic agent to wait on him (the great man) in order to receive instructions as to the manner in which she (Miss Sherwood) should present herself before “a very distinguished lady;” possibly an ex-queen, cer-

tainly, at least a countess. Annie set forth, unwilling to lose even a chance, but very doubtful, after so many failures, of any good result.

On her way to the agent's, she happened to meet Bertha's French friend. "Where are you going?" she inquired.

"To the Governess' Institution," replied Annie.

"Not the Union, I suppose?" said a lively young woman accompanying Mademoiselle.

"No, not to H—— Street," said Annie, smiling sadly.

"I asked you," said the French girl, "because my — the lady with whom I live, is looking out for a governess for her sister."

"Are the children boys?" asked Annie, eagerly.

"No; girls."

"Then I shall not do for them. I can only teach boys, for I never learned the piano, nor French, nor bead-work, nor crochet."

"Oh, pray do not name music and French with those silly things!" said Emilie.

"Don't they always go together?"

“ I can’t argue the point,” replied Emilie ; “ argument tires the brain, and makes one look old and *ridée* before their time. I think you will suit Mrs. Maberly. Her children are young, and can’t want music yet ; when they do, I dare say she will be liberal, and give them a master.”

Annie cared little for her destination ; she did not even inquire in what county the possible patroness resided. She knew that “ the world was *not* all before her, where to choose ”—that she must go where necessity pointed, and she almost mistook hopelessness for resignation.

It was agreed that she should call at four o’clock that afternoon to see Mrs. Maberly’s sister, or rather to be looked at by her, and then Annie prosecuted her walk to the scholastic agent’s, who had summoned her to his august presence. By the agent she was directed to the distinguished lady in question, who interrogated her so imperiously, that pride conquering prudence, the governess-candidate remarked, that the engagement proposed would not suit her at all, and so saying bowed herself out, perhaps as much to her own surprise as to that of the great lady.

The “distinguished lady” was not really of high rank, but having had a seventh cousin elevated to the peerage by the Liberal administration, when desirous of securing a majority in the Upper House, she had succeeded in persuading herself—and indeed in persuading some other people, which was more remarkable—that she was a member of a noble family, though her own vulgarity of mind and bearing largely contradicted the blazonry she arrogated to herself.

When the contumacious governess had departed, the great lady’s footman heard her murmur to herself that the world must be coming to an end; there was no distinction of ranks left, mushroom parvenus affected dignity, and low-bred poverty insulted opulence and fashion!

Poor distinguished lady! the footman who had heard her murmur her pathetic complaint, was commissioned to carry a note, which she wrote in agitated haste, to the agent who had recommended Miss Sherwood, complaining of his client, and conveying something like a threat to himself, if he should in any way assist the delinquent’s views. The distinguished lady added, that “Mr. —— could inform that

civil young person, Miss Smith, that she might have a chance of success, if she liked to call again."

The "civil young person" was the daughter of a respectable grocer in the Edgware Road. She went to the great lady's, was very well treated, and being certainly very worthy of Mrs. ——'s praises, was shortly promoted to the post of head toad-eater, in which capacity she spent several happy and profitable years.

At four o'clock Annie stood before Mrs. Maberly's sister, Mrs. Stuart, who graciously waved her hand, thereby intimating that she might be seated. She was then catechised at length, and at the same time instructed as to the demeanour she was to observe at Locksly Lodge, should she be so fortunate as to obtain the appointment.

Mrs. Stuart's hauteur as she leaned back in her lounge, was particularly galling to Annie, but she forcibly compressed her lips, and determined she would bridle her indignation this time. In her walk from the mansion of the one great lady she had offended, to that of the other whose scrutiny she was to undergo, she had had time to

reflect, and she had thought sorrowfully over her young sister's position, and resolved that, for the love of dear Ellen, she would curb her proud spirit, and try to please Mrs. Stuart. For herself, Annie would not have borne the humiliation of *that lady's* arrogance another moment.

"I suppose you have no objection to solitude? You can bear it well, Miss Sherwood?"

"Perfectly well."

"And you are a good walker? You can amuse the children in their play-hours, I hope?"

"Anything which the duties of my office require."

"You do not expect, of course, to be mixed up in any way with the family—or their friends?" and Mrs. Stuart coloured a little, the least in the world.

"I have no such expectations or wishes," answered Annie, with a perfectly unmoved face.

"Then you may call again. Let me see! What is to-day?"

"Wednesday."

"Then you may call next Monday. By that time I shall be able to receive an answer

from my sister. Yes, you may call on Monday."

Mrs. Stuart turned away, and took up a book; Annie felt herself dismissed, and retired.

CHAPTER XII.

ON a cold January night, with very insufficient wrappings to defend her from the inclement weather, Annie Sherwood stood in the front of a little inn at L——, watching the unlading of an omnibus, which had brought her from the railway station to the little old-fashioned country town, near which she was to reside in the family of Mr. Maberly.

A hired conveyance was waiting to receive her and her luggage, as soon as she should have identified and received her little property. Little, indeed, it was; but ere the object of securing it could be effected, the poor girl was half frozen, and trembling in every limb. At length Annie found herself rolling along a smooth, level road, and knew that in less than half an hour she must stand before her future patron. She was not nervous, but low and sad. She knew what she had to expect, or rather fancied she knew it; and instead of being overwhelmed

by the coming trial, she felt nerved to endurance. A sudden jerk, caused by a stone in the road, and the coachman alighted, turned his horses to the right, and entered the gates of some enclosure. Then he remounted the coach-box, drove a short distance, and stopped before a large house, dimly defined in the gloom of night. A sharp, sudden ring, the hall-door opened, a stream of light from within pierced the obscurity.

Annie Sherwood's heart did not beat; no, it stood still, quite still; it seemed dead; she pressed her hands on her chilled bosom, drew one long gasping breath, and stood in the hall, frightfully pale, amid a group of servants. That night the footman told the butler in confidence that Miss Sherwood was decidedly ugly, whereas the *previous one* before was a splendid woman!

A respectable elderly woman in black approached Annie, and civilly, even respectfully, offered to conduct her to her rooms. She even carried her parcels for her! unprecedented condescension in an upper servant!

Annie looked up in gratified surprise at the pleasant countenance beside her; a ray of hope darted into her heart; perhaps, after

all, she should find friends there, perhaps receive a kind, warm welcome, that would come like a balm to a spirit deeply wounded, though it was not of a nature to be crushed.

She followed her guide up a broad staircase, and across a gallery lined on either side with books, whose aspect greeted the student girl like familiar friends, and strengthened her new-born hope. She was led into a large carpeted room, tolerably well furnished, through which a blazing fire cast the ruddy hue of cheerfulness. A comfortable and plenteous supper was spread on the table, and looked very inviting to the hungry traveller. Leaning one arm on the mantelshelf, stood a lady, with so bright and fascinating a smile that the gazer would have been too much charmed to note that the features it lit were quite irregular, and that the tall, elegant figure they surmounted, was thin, almost to attenuation.

Annie looked at that beautiful smile, and it won on her so much that its light became instantly reflected on her own speaking face. She advanced with more confidence, feeling sure that a friendly hand would be extended to welcome her ; but she was mistaken : Mrs. Maberly only bowed, and said something

civil about cold and fatigue. Annie forced back the appearance of disappointment, and answering with quiet self-possession, seated herself by the fire. Mrs. Maberly was naturally good tempered, she wished to be kind, but at the same time to keep the governess in her proper place; after a few unimportant remarks, she said, "Good night, *ma'am*," and retired.

Annie scarcely tasted her solitary supper, but sat by the fire brooding over melancholy thoughts, inspired by the unimportant conversation of the last few minutes. At length she took a candle, and prepared to try the comfortable-looking bed, which awaited her in the adjoining room. It was only on the following morning she discovered, that her apartments were placed at quite the opposite end of the house to that part which the family occupied, indeed so distinct were they, that her isolation was complete, her only neighbours during the long stormy nights of winter being the rats and mice which usually inhabit old country-houses. Annie's heart was too full of sad cares of another kind to admit of nervous fears, or imaginative terrors; moreover, she was naturally courageous; had it been otherwise she might

well have conjured up a ghostly visitant stalking along the deserted gallery and gliding among the hangings of her bed. As it was, she spent a sleepless night, and rose unrefreshed, to begin her new and untried duties.

When Annie's pupils were presented to her, she was agreeably surprised. Some of them were intelligent, and all so young that they were as yet untaught in the world's ways. One was a beauty, and in her motherly pride for her favourite child, and her earnest wish that she should produce a favourable impression on the stranger, insignificant as that stranger might be, Mrs. Maberly momentarily forgot her family pride, and spoke naturally, even in a friendly tone to the governess, but ever and anon she checked herself, and resumed a proper distance of manner. Annie noticed that Mrs. Maberly always addressed her as "ma'am," and thought it must be an aristocratic habit (as the good Vicar of Wakefield long considered the swearing of the ladies of quality, who patronized himself and his daughters), until she heard afterwards from undoubted authority, that her country education had made her mistake novelty for high-breeding.

On the whole, Mrs. Maberly's children seemed well pleased with their new instructress, regarding her entirely in the light of a fresh playmate ; but when they came to sit down to lessons, they speedily broke out into open rebellion, and Annie feared she had become tamer to so many importations from a menagerie.

People may mock at what they imagine petty grievances, but the poor governess's heart sinks within her when, sitting down with three or four sweet-looking children, whose mouths dimple into smiles, whose sunny eyes tell of nothing but mirth and good-humour, she finds that the least effort for their real instruction, the least conscientious discharge of duty, and the smiling cherubs, from long indulgence and pampering, are on the instant transformed into bitter revolvers, agitated by the counterfeit of those evil passions which we are apt merely to attribute to their elders. It is heart-sickening to witness an attempt at leading such perverted spirits, perverted, not by themselves, but by their parents' careless habits or moral weakness.

Some of them might be rescued from destruction, some even trained to angels, but

the teacher's hands are fettered ; she has been told in general terms that her charges are to do just as they like ! that she is not to force them on in their studies—that all things will come right with time—that “the beauty” (the fairest child goes by that name in the household) is delicate, and must be especially spared ! yet the governess will presently be reproached with the slow progress of her pupils ! Poor governess—yet poorer children !

Before Annie had been one month in the house, she witnessed the disgraceful scene of the beautiful Ellinor slapping her mother's face, in a fit of passion at having received some unwonted command. Mrs. Maberly had perhaps never before contradicted her sweet Ellinor—she was roused to anger, and returned the blow, not in the way of correction, but reprisal. The beauty reared once more on tip-toe, and with her fairy, little hand again smote the cheek of her parent ; for awhile the scene continued—a blow, and its return. It ended by the foolish mother begging a sort of pardon, a kiss was exchanged, and the quarrel made up, to be renewed, probably, when the beauty should be again provoked by the exercise of an authority not habitual.

Annie Sherwood, with all her imagined knowledge of the world, was still too unsophisticated to view without shuddering horror, such scenes as we have attempted to describe. She had seen the children of her country neighbours sometimes wilful, sometimes injured by injudicious training, but she had no conception of the school, in which nearly all the children of those considering themselves the higher classes, are brought up.

Annie's heart sank within her, not so much at her own uncomfortable position in a family wherein selfishness and disorder reigned paramount, as from the dread of finding that Ellen was equally tried. Mrs. Maberly's children were not only idle in the common acceptation of the word, but were entirely wanting in energy for every purpose of life, except quarrelling and annoying one another. Their toys and varied means of amusement had lost all power to charm. They were all, especially the beauty, as completely *blasés* as the world's worn-out votaries. If Annie tried to teach them a new game, they were immediately wearied; did she read them a story, they gave their languid attention for a few minutes, and then insisted

that that should be broken off and another tale begun.

Ellinor Maberly had very little sense, and having been so frequently told of her exceeding loveliness, frankly declared that she need learn nothing—she was beautiful, that was enough !

Of course the labours of the governess among those poor children were very hopeless, but she had a woman's heart, and soon grew attached to them. They had their bright spots, they were very loving, and might have been rendered docile by gentle firmness ; but then they were never to be contradicted ; and indeed at the most trifling opposition, they filled the house with cries more piercing than the torture has drawn from many a martyr. What was the governess to do ? complain ? to whom ? To the mother, who allowed her face to be slapped by her child ? To the father, who appeared ignorant of everything concerning his children ?

Annie had been several weeks in the house before she had once met Mr. Maberly.

Should she attempt correction herself, she would immediately lose her employment.

“ Do you like company, Miss Sherwood ? ”

asked Annie's eldest pupil one evening, when she had been, much to her own satisfaction, arrayed in white, with a broad blue sash, to go down to dessert, for there was a dinner party. "Do you like company?"

"I like good company, Geraldine; that is, I like conversing with intelligent, well-informed people. But why do you ask?"

"Oh, nothing particular; only I was thinking you would like to be down-stairs this evening. Now, wouldn't you?"

"No, indeed, Geraldine, I should not."

"Oh, but I know you would; you're only telling a fib, Miss Sherwood."

"I don't know such things as 'fibs,' Geraldine," said Annie, seriously; "and I never tell what is not true; it would be wrong and dishonourable."

"But if you're not found out, Miss Sherwood?"

"Oh, Geraldine! I am shocked to hear you talk this way," said Annie.

"Now, pray don't scold me, Miss Sherwood," said the girl, petulantly, and putting up her shoulder; "it's very unkind of you; you'll make me cry, you know you will, and then I shall look a horrid fright at dessert. I am sure I have been kind to you, for I

asked mamma to let you go down to see the company, only she said she wouldn't!"

"I am obliged to you, dear Geraldine, for thinking of me," said Annie, colouring with mortification; "but I beg you'll never do such a thing again, for I am much happier up-stairs."

"But I shall do it again, though," replied the child, "that I shall, for Uncle Hal says he is quite curious to see you. He asked me if you were pretty; of course I said no, for you know you're not at all pretty, Miss Sherwood. You are not fair, and you've an ugly nose, and your eyes are so big and grey, and your gown, why your gown is quite shabby! Now, is not all that true?" she added, looking quite triumphant at her own sagacity.

"Quite true," said Annie, trying to laugh. "Yes, I am dark, I have grey eyes, and a bad nose. My gown is, as you say, very shabby. But you should not say these things. I don't mind—that is, I don't mind very much; but it hurts people's feelings to hear——"

"What does hurting people's feelings mean?" interrupted Geraldine; but just then she was summoned to dessert. "Do I

look nice? do I look pretty?" she asked, quickly.

"No, Geraldine, you look——"

"How do I look?"

"Wilful and conceited!" said Annie, as the offended girl flounced out of the room.

Annie did not speak thus because she was mortified; but from what she believed to be her duty. She had no personal vanity to occasion mortification, therefore Geraldine's coarse remarks had not galled her, but she was greatly annoyed at the supposition that Mrs. Maberly might imagine she had prompted Geraldine's request to admit the solitary governess to her circle. The next day, Mrs. Maberly said to her, "I should have asked you down-stairs yesterday evening, Miss Sherwood, but it would not be quite the thing. I have so many brothers!"

"Thank you," replied the governess, "I find my time quite filled."

Annie had habitually such command over her emotions, that her feelings were not betrayed, and Mrs. Maberly left her, with the promise of sending her a nice book and some patterns for collars; and bore away with herself the comfortable assurance that she might pursue her selfish policy without

making her governess discontented. As for her dress, no doubt Geraldine's mother appreciated its shabbiness as much as she did ; but then, who would see her toilette, shut up in that remote room at the top of the house ? On the whole, Mrs. Maberly liked Annie Sherwood, that is, she suited her purpose, so she did not ill-treat her ; but she took care to show her a back staircase, and hinted that she had much better use it—of course, entirely for her own convenience.

CHAPTER XIII.

ANNIE SHERWOOD seldom strayed from the precincts of her school-room, she had no reason for passing beyond. Her pupils disliked walking, so of course they never walked, and she had little inducement to wander out alone. If she did so, it was with such a feeling of utter solitude, that she hastened back to the gloom of her own apartments, where, from the hour in which the children left her, no human foot but her own resounded till the following morning, unless it were that of the servant who had greeted her on her arrival, and whom Annie soon learned to thank as the thoughtful provider of the many comforts with which she was furnished—comforts which were so utterly at variance with the habitual negligence of the family towards her, that they seemed at first to have dropped direct from the skies.

Mrs. Maberly had, as she told Annie, a number of brothers. One of them was peculiarly interesting, on account of his

having endured some real or imaginary persecution. He had challenged his commander, who had in some way offended his dignity, perhaps by exacting more subordination than Mr. Augustus Fitzgerald Oakley thought proper to be yielded by one of his descent and position in the county of——.

Through some inconceivable mistake, or some gross blunder on the part of Captain Blessington, of H.M.S. "Medusa," he had failed to discover the immense merits of Lieut. Augustus Fitzgerald Oakley, and had ignorantly confounded him with the sons of many other country squires of small fortunes and large pretensions, and had consequently made no distinction in discipline between the said Lieut. Augustus Fitzgerald Oakley, and Lieut. Jones, Lieut. White, Lieut. Smith, Lieut. Brown, Lieut. Thompson, or—any other lieutenant! The consequence was, that Lieut. Augustus Fitzgerald Oakley watched his opportunity, caught at some words of disparagement supposed to be uttered by the Captain, and repeated to Oakley by an empty-headed woman, and boldly challenged him. Capt. Blessington was a man of sense; his known bravery made it unnecessary for him to establish his

reputation by blowing out the Lieutenant's brains, and he wisely declined compromising his own dignity by fighting his subordinate. On this the fury of Lieut. A. F. O. raged uncontrollably; he did everything insulting which he possibly could to arouse the spirit of Captain Blessington and force him to fight, but his expectations were disappointed; instead of meeting his commander in the field, he awoke one morning to find himself under arrest!

Poor unhappy Augustus Fitzgerald Oakley! he was not literary, or he might have written verses; not a philosopher, or he might have pondered how Pompey fell, or other men at least as great as Pompey or himself!

It was believed by some that Captain Blessington would have made strenuous efforts to soften the sentence of the court-martial to which Oakley's own intemperate folly had brought him, but his threats continued so very warlike, that the only means of taming the belligerent seemed to be to deprive him of his sword. So Lieut. Augustus Fitzgerald Oakley was broken, and her Majesty's royal navy deprived of its brightest ornament (in his own estimation), in fact, of

the only man capable, should opportunity offer, of eclipsing the immortal names of Howe and Nelson.

Since the decision of the venal court—as the ex-Lieut. was pleased to call the just tribunal which had per force condemned him—Mr. Augustus Fitzgerald Oakley had resided on his paternal estate, a dilapidated old place, which he fondly imagined one of the most valuable in the county. He had lived in retirement, from which few of the neighbouring families cared to draw him, as it was generally known, that he solaced himself for past misfortunes by low pleasures. Those who lived at a distance, and knew him only through newspaper reports (especially the ladies), had transformed him into a *héros de Roman*, imagining, as many people do, that misfortune and merit are inseparable.

On the whole, A. F. O. was rather what the French call *redevable* to the circumstances which had occurred; as to them he owed a species of notoriety, which he and his relations mistook for celebrity, and which he certainly never would have enjoyed had it not been for the timely persecution of Capt. Blessington.

Among the ladies whose imagination, if not their sensibilities, had been touched by reading the newspaper paragraphs of which Oakley was the hero, was Annie Sherwood. His apparently gallant spirit had taught her to extenuate conduct, which her principles could not approve, and the issue of the trial secured her strongest, warmest sympathies for the supposed sufferer. The affair was not recent, but she remembered it well, and when the communicative Geraldine told her that the hero was her uncle, Annie was not only interested, she was positively anxious to see this "observed of all observers," as she believed Mr. Oakley to be, and fully expected to find him, "the glass of fashion and the mould of form;" in fact, in every way interesting.

Thenceforward, for one long month Annie had an object in view that broke the monotony of her existence. She liked (herself unseen) to take her station by the window, and watch for his possible coming. Late one night she stood by that window—not looking for the hero of her imagination, but watching the troop of stars come forth from the prevailing gloom, like bright hopes arising in a despairing mind; and as she

gazed, the poor solitary governess wondered whether any stars would ever come forth to light the midnight of her darkened life ! It was spring-tide, but still cold, nevertheless Annie Sherwood threw open the window ; and believing that at that hour she must be perfectly unobserved, she leaned for some time on the sill, resting her head upon her hand. Presently she thought she heard a rustling among the leaves (some of which still strewed the ground), but after listening for a while, she persuaded herself that it was a nervous fancy, and looked neither for an apparition ghostly nor bodily. A little later, the full-orbed moon came forth, and dimming the stars, gloriously lit up the lawn and shrubberies. It was a lovely night indeed, and Annie repeated to herself the lines from *The Merchant of Venice*, where Lorenzo says to Jessica—

“How fair the moonlight sleeps upon that bank ;”

and she wanted some one with her to share the pleasure she felt in gazing on such a scene. She arose, and sought the only companion of her solitude, a book ; she needed no lamp but the serene light of heaven, and she sat down again by the window and read

The Martyrs of Science (wherein science becomes poetry), and while she communed with the soul of Galileo, she read too, in his book, the firmament.

Again the sound that she had heard, like footsteps, struck her ear, and then a tap at one of the lower windows. A tall figure cast its shadow on the broad moonlight, and a young man stepped forward and paced up and down, not on the gravel path, but on the soft, yielding grass. His slight figure seemed well formed, and as he took off his hat, and shook back the dark locks from his brow, that brow, and the hand which revealed it, looked white as December's snow-wreath. Annie forgot the natural effect of moonlight; forgot, moreover, that

“Distance lends enchantment to the view,”

and mentally pronounced that Augustus Oakley (for who else could it be) was indeed the “mould of form” her fancy had pictured, and she paraphrased *Romeo's* exclamation into

“His beauty hangs upon the wings of night
Like a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear!”;

Then she smiled at herself, and thought how she would have laughed at Ellen, if she had

thus admired a handsome stranger. Still, though she mocked herself, Annie would probably have dreamed of the hero of the night, had not her bud of romance been cruelly snapped from its stem by a very vulgar reality. A circumstance occurred to account for Mr. Oakley's apparent admiration of a moonlight scene, which he might have enjoyed equally on his own lawn: it was soon apparent that he had an appointment with a servant-maid of his sister's, whom Annie afterwards accidentally discovered to be a young woman who waited on the school-room party, wearing no cap, but very carefully-dressed flaxen hair, and boasting a pair of deep blue eyes, as blue as glass beads, and very much like them! Annie Sherwood shut the window and went to bed, rather chilled and disappointed in her little romance, but fortunately saved from the humiliation and sorrow, of becoming too deeply interested in her patroness's libertine brother.

A few days after, as Annie was walking through one of the shrubberies, she overtook Mrs. Maberly's youngest child—a little boy, scarcely two years old, who had strayed forth unnoticed. She took the little thing

in her arms, and was coaxing him into a better acquaintance, when a gentleman stepped forth from another path, and began to play with the child over Annie's shoulder, but without speaking or bowing to her. He however quite made up for his silence by the unscrupulous impertinence with which he examined her half-averted face. Apparently the examination did not please him; for as Annie was going to place the child on the walk, and leave it to his care, the gentleman (?) whistled and turned away.

Annie had not failed to recognise the hero of the moonlight adventure, though the glare of day stripped him of many advantages, with which the goddess of night had invested him. He was good-looking, certainly; but the bright, pinky hue of his cheeks gave him at once an effeminate and a vulgar stamp, and yet worse, he looked what he was—a brainless fool. He was, after all, not the interesting object of Captain Blessington's persecution, for in the course of the evening Geraldine (who was always unwilling to suppress any information she possessed) exclaimed, "Miss Sherwood, I was quite right in saying you were

ugly ! Uncle Hal says you are a fright, and a dowdy, and——”

“ You need not tell me the rest.”

“ Oh, but I must ! He says he was very curious to see you (he always is curious when any new nurse or maid comes), but now he has seen you, he never wants to look at your face again ! I heard him tell mamma so (I stood behind the arbutus hedge to listen) ; and mamma laughed very much, and said she knew him and Uncle Augustus far too well to have a pretty governess, and that she was very glad you were ugly, but that you suited her very well, and so Uncle Hal must not tease and make fun of you, but leave you alone.”

It was all in vain that Annie tried to set before Geraldine the impropriety of listening to conversations not meant for her ear. She did not seem to know what “ wrong ” meant ; so Annie tried to explain by Ellen’s word “ sinful,” and was met by the startling remark, from a girl scarcely eleven, “ But perhaps the Bible is not true ! Uncle Hal told me it wasn’t ; and if he is right, of course it’s no matter if we do bad things, as we sha’n’t be punished for them ! ”

The governess heard the child's speech with the deepest consternation, and gazed on her with a countenance so full of sorrow and pity, that the girl's heart was touched, and its best feelings awakened. She threw her arms round Annie, expressed contrition, and promised not to say such things again, though she added, naturally enough, "I am always hearing them from my relations, though papa and mamma don't talk so. Uncle Augustus never goes to church; Uncle Hal does sometimes, but then it's to see some one. I know who!" she added, slyly.

"But, Geraldine, you promised me that you would try to avoid saying or doing wrong things. Now, if you really mean to keep your word, you must resolve never to listen when your parents or uncles are talking; or, if you hear anything accidentally, not to repeat it."

"But don't you like to hear everything, Miss Sherwood?"

"No, indeed, there are many things I would much rather not hear, I assure you."

"Well, I can't understand that at all! I

like to hear everything that happens, and more too. I would much rather people would invent something to tell me, than that I should hear nothing new. Oh, I must tell you one thing—I really must. Do you know what the nurserymaid says? She thinks it quite beneath her to wait on the school-room, and says you're a hired servant just as much as she is! Uncle Hal thinks her very pretty; do you call her pretty?"

"Oh, Geraldine, your word is already broken; you promised me——"

"I'll try and keep my promise, indeed I will. I mean to begin to-morrow, but habit is so strong!"

"Strong indeed!" said the disheartened governess, shaking her head.

In the meanwhile, Geraldine rushed to the window. "Come here, Miss Sherwood! come here!" she cried suddenly. Willing to please her by compliance, Annie went over to the window. A gentleman was at the door on horseback, his hat was off, his face fully revealed. He was about forty; plain would be a very mild word to describe his coarse features, unredeemed by any pleasing or intelligent expression. The only thing that countenance spoke was fierce passion

and gross sensuality ; his figure was short and thick set. “ There ! that is Uncle Augustus, Miss Sherwood ; the one I told you about, who wanted to fight with Captain Blessington ! ”

CHAPTER XIV.

“MY BEST-LOVED ANNIE,—

“How welcome your kind letters are to me, doubly welcome since their cheerful tone assures me that you are not unhappy. I prayed and hoped it might be so, till at last I began to feel confident that your merits must command the consideration they deserve.

“You have told me to write about myself (though I would much rather talk of you, at once an easier and a pleasanter task), and I will try to do as you wish. In my existence no change ever comes. I am sure I ought to be contented, for no one ever finds fault with me, and when my day’s work is over, which it is at eight o’clock, I am left entirely to myself. I believe the Ferrers actually forget my existence. Of course the evening is quite at my own disposal. I am sorry to say that there is no piano in the school-room, (I give the children their music lessons in the drawing-room, when the family are out

driving or walking,) so that I cannot practise. There is often music down-stairs in the evenings; I used to leave my door open to listen, but it made me feel sad, so now I shut myself in and read, when I can get a book.

“ Miss Ellen used to come for an hour every evening to talk to me, which made me feel very grateful, I thought it so kind; but she tried so hard to convince me that our dear father’s system of religion was erroneous, that at last her visits became more painful than pleasant. She was then very *low church*, but now has gone into the contrary extreme. But I must tell you some of the late events of this little world of Elmgrove. I should not feel it right to talk of the family I live with to any one else, but you, dear Annie, you are myself!

“ You remember that in one of my former letters I spoke of a new curate coming, and of Miss Ellen’s dread of Puseyism arriving in his train? Well, he did come, that dreaded curate, and all her predictions were strangely verified. Mr. Newingham preached in a surplice the first Sunday after his arrival, and showed various other signs of Oxford training. Mr. Pendex—Mr. Weston is rather lax, though it seems unkind to say so of him,

and perhaps he is better described as an easy, good-natured man, who, unless people do something very glaring, will see no fault in them, and lets them have all their own way. Mr. Newingham is a great zealot ; but seems amiable and pleasant, and certainly is remarkably handsome. The Squire of Elmgrove—*i.e.*, my patron—is very much opposed to Puseyism ; he not only refuses to invite Mr. Newingham, but after remonstrating with the Vicar on the impropriety of his choice, has grown quite cool to him, and will not attend church when the curate preaches. The ladies of the family, however, attend, and you will scarcely believe me when I tell you that Miss Ellen was converted almost immediately to the Tractarian views. I am sure she is perfectly sincere, and she certainly does a great deal of good, incessantly visiting the poor, and schools, &c. She is the only member of the family personally acquainted with the curate ; of course they are drawn together by his duties, and the good works in which she delights. I should not be surprised, with her enthusiastic character, if she became a Sellonite.

“ There is something of a poetical and imaginative cast in this Puseyism. I like their

beautiful churches, their grand choral services, and their self-denying charities, but I cannot get reconciled to a system which magnifies human merits; surely we have nothing to boast. I have positively caught myself writing reflections for which I have not head enough, so I must return to Mr. Newingham. He has a fine voice, and his preaching is often effective in matter, always so in manner; but I wish he would talk to us a little more of God and the Bible, and a little less of 'the church!' Our dear father used to explain 'the church' as formed of all believers and doers of the Word; Mr. Newingham's theology makes it a body of ecclesiastics.

"Poor Miss Ellen is getting into great trouble at home on account of her new views. Her father is vexed and angry, her sisters and Mr. Vincent (he almost lives here), rally her unmercifully. She does not now bring forward texts as she used to do when assailed, but quotes instead the Fathers, and 'Tracts for the Times.' She seems born to be a martyr; but she takes persecution so joyfully, that I suspect she has either the fancied consciousness of meriting reward, or else she is attached to Mr. Newingham, and

bears all for his sake. Perhaps it is so, they are so much together.

“Now, Annie, you must not think, from what I am going to tell you, that I have grown vain and foolish, for I know he is only amusing himself at my expense ; but if I chance to meet Mr. Francis Vincent alone, (though he never addresses one word to me, or one look, in the presence of any other person,) he immediately begins talking, and pays me the most exaggerated compliments.

“If he sees any one approaching at such times, he darts off, as if detected in a crime ! You must not fancy I am flattered or pleased by these attentions ; he is the last man whose compliments I should value ; and he is on other occasions so grossly rude, that I must despise him. Only fancy his meeting me in the hall, walking before me into the dining-room to luncheon, and seating himself without offering me a chair, and perhaps the very next day telling me I am an angel, and that he adores me. I believe he knows pretty well what I think of him. I am not surprised Miss Ellen admires Mr. Newingham, however extravagant his views may be : he is evidently a highly-bred, as well as a clever

man ; she must contrast his polish with her cousin's coarse vulgarity.

“ Mrs. Ferrers continually lies on the sofa, but I cannot tell why, for she looks quite strong and well. When her husband is away, the young ladies are often very rude to her, but she does not mind it, and reads all the new novels with uninterrupted pleasure.

“ My charges do not improve, I am sorry to say ; perhaps I have a wrong method with them, but I am afraid they are learning nothing. They so often run away, and hide themselves at lesson-hours, that a great part of my time is consumed in hunting for them ; it is usually on these occasions I meet that odious Mr. Vincent. I never called any one odious before. You see the commerce of the world makes one wicked ! but indeed, he is very disagreeable ; you would almost hate him.

“ I am very much interested in what you told me of your discovery ; I mean, that Mr. Augustus Oakley is Mrs. Maberly's brother. Perhaps, by this time, you have seen him ; pray tell me exactly what he is like. I can't help fancying him something of a hero. I declare your going to his sister's

may prove quite a little romance ! After all, though, one can't help sympathising with such an interesting person ; it was wrong in him to want to fight a duel. So don't lose your heart to him. *I should not like you to marry him*, Annie, unless he were very, very sorry for having sent a challenge.

“ Your loving sister,

ELLEN.”

Poor simple Ellen ! Your letter must stand as you wrote it ! But what a day-dream ! Mr. Augustus Fitzgerald Oakley marry your plain little governess sister ! Silly, silly Ellen ! you have been poring over fairy tales by the light of your single dim candle ! Mr. Augustus Fitzgerald Oakley ! What next ? a royal duke ?

CHAPTER XV.

“ A DISMAL letter, dear Annie, I must send you this time ; I am afraid I must, though I had quite resolved only to write cheerfully, but I have been so vexed and annoyed lately that I cannot refrain from telling you of my little trials. I have had one pleasant surprise however, but I hope you wont laugh at me for calling it pleasant, when you know what it is ! Indeed, I have had two surprises lately ; not the least has been to recognise in a young relation of Mrs. Ferrers', who is spending his vacation at Elmgrove, the *preux chevalier* who delivered me from a monster, and so strongly recommended to us the study of Froissart. He is a very nice, amiable, high-spirited lad, as his timely assistance once testified. Perhaps I should not have recognised him, only that he came into the school-room one day, and turning over some books, in the course of conversation, exclaimed—‘ Have you ever read Froissart, Miss Sherwood ?’

concluding with, 'Pray do read Froissart, if you have not.' Mr. Beresford, for that is his name, certainly did not recognise me the least; but involuntarily I laughed so heartily that I was heard in another part of the house. Little did I know the mortification which that unfortunate laugh was to cause me!

"Mr. Beresford looked rather surprised and offended. Of course I apologized, and, regarding him in the light of a youth, I think that when I begged his pardon I shook hands with him. I told him that I was the person to whom he had some months before shown great kindness, and he appeared much pleased at the recognition. I, too, was pleased, for of course after what had passed I felt that we could not be quite strangers to each other. I am afraid you will think I acted imprudently in recalling our unpleasant adventure; but I think, indeed I am sure, our young knight-errant has too much discretion to publish it.

"The next day, when I took the children out, young Beresford went with us; and I was very glad to have him to talk to, for though a mere boy in years, he is very sensible and well read. But oh, Annie

dear ! it seems that I committed a grievous indiscretion in allowing a youth of sixteen to accompany my pupils and myself. When we returned, Miss Ferrers was standing at one of the windows, and looked so extremely ill-natured, that her very glance made me nervous. I had scarcely taken my bonnet off before I was summoned to Mrs. Ferrers' presence. After motioning me to draw near the sofa, she began in her usual gentle voice (a very gentle one it is), to this effect : ' I am grieved and pained, Miss Sherwood, after the good opinion I had formed of one so strongly recommended to me by my sister, to be constrained to remonstrate with you on the levity, not to say the gross impropriety of your conduct ! ' I was shocked, Annie ! completely stunned ! The very exclamations of surprise and pain which I might naturally have uttered, were checked by the choking tears which gushed forth in spite of me. I could not ask an explanation in words, but I suppose my face of dismay spoke for me. ' The preceptress of youth is particularly called on for discretion,' continued Mrs. Ferrers ; ' and a young person in your position, should be doubly careful to evince, by the modesty of her demeanour,

that she has no intention or desire to lay snares for any gentleman !’

“ ‘Snares !’ I gasped out.

“ ‘Yes, Miss Sherwood,’ she repeated, in the same soft voice ; ‘Snares. I must request that while you are in my ser—my employment, you will refrain from receiving gentlemen in the school-room.’

“ ‘I have never received any gentlemen there,’ I replied; and all this time I was standing at the foot of Mrs. Ferrers’ couch, and feeling quite sick and faint.

“ ‘Can you deny Mr. Beresford having been there yesterday?’ I was going to say that I regarded him as a mere boy, but Mrs. Ferrers did not intend me to answer; she was now growing warmer. ‘Nay; do not add duplicity to impropriety,’ she exclaimed; ‘not only was he there, but you were seen, through the open door, holding his hand, or he yours, which is much the same thing. And I find that this morning he has accompanied you in your walk ! You may now retire; your youth and inexperience induce me to be lenient; but remember, it is the last time I can pass by such glaring misconduct; if it occurs again, you will leave !’

“ Oh, Annie ! my agony at these unmerited

accusations made me feel as if my heart would burst. I tried hard to speak, but words utterly failed me; my breath came in gasps, and I stood riveted to the spot. Mrs. Ferrers waved me away, with one word—‘Remember!’ and turned again to her book. Still I stood; I had no power to move. Young Beresford came in; he looked surprised and sorry to see me in tears. But there is an intuitive delicacy of feeling in that boy, and he uttered no exclamation. When, at length, I turned to leave the room, he hastened to open the door for me, and, as he did so, bowed.

“A loud, ringing laugh from a bay-window at the end of the room made me start; it came from Miss Ferrers, who had been present, though I was quite unconscious of it, and had witnessed the whole scene of humiliation. I went straight to my work; my pupils were doubly troublesome, or I less patient than usual. I cried nearly all day like a child. From that time Miss Ferrers and Miss Sophia, especially the former, have sneered at me whenever we have met. Sometimes I think they have noticed Mr. Vincent’s talking to me now and then, and imagine that I encourage

him ; if so, they little know me, for I have a complete aversion to him, and always shun his path. If Miss Ferrers is attached to her cousin, there is every excuse to be made for her; and in any case, I must try to avoid all angry and unforgiving feelings, though it is hard to be accused of conduct which makes one tremble to think of only.

“ When I had a little recovered from my agitation, I was tempted, very strongly tempted, to return to the drawing-room, and tell Mrs. Ferrers I would leave. But then I thought over the trials we went through last year, and our immense difficulties before we could obtain situations, and I determined to pray for patience, and hope on, feeling sure that all will work for good in the end.

“ I am not the only one in trouble ; poor Miss Ellen is in great grief. I told you a great deal about Mr. Newingham in my last letter. He is certainly a man of talent, but he has introduced so many innovations in the service, and Mr. Weston has let him have so much of his own way, that nearly all the people have deserted the Church, and are gone over to the Wesleyans. One day he actually retired from the altar backwards, bowing all the time ; and, in

doing so, he gave us the opportunity of observing, that he had a small circle on the crown of his head shaven, like the tonsure of the Roman Catholic priests.

“To keep him in the curacy after this discovery was quite impossible, though he was a great favourite with Mr. Weston, who was sincerely grieved to part with him. But he is gone, and poor Miss Ellen is broken-hearted. She looks so wretched, I am afraid she will have a fit of illness ; and, I am sorry to say, that instead of trying to console her, her sisters laugh and sneer at her openly, and most unkindly encourage Mr. Vincent to do the same. She has begun to come back to me in the evenings, but she often sits without saying a word. I wish so much that I could do something to comfort her ; she has always been kind to me. Young Beresford is gone. He never came into the school-room again after that day : I asked him not to do so, and he complied without asking me for any reason. He knew that I should not like to give an explanation. Only think, Annie ! the day before he left he rode over to Groverton, and returned with a parcel under his arm. Well, you will say there was nothing wonderful in that ; but after

he was gone, I found on the school-room table such a beautiful copy of Froissart. He must have put it there while I was out. He had written my name in it, and added,—‘In remembrance of the 10th of September.’ I think that must have been about the date of our first meeting. Ah! why should the innocent friendship of this good youth be construed into evil!

“But, Annie dear, I have not yet told you of my other pleasant surprise—I have put that off till the last. I am like Miranda in *The Tempest*,

‘I weep at that I’m glad of!’

and yet, perhaps you will think it a mere trifle when I have told you. But it is so pleasant to see a face that is not quite strange when one lives among those who will always continue distant strangers, even if I remain with them for years.

“You see I am beginning to know the world, and have always seen many of my fanciful visions (of realizing friends in a governess life) melt away

‘Like snow-flakes in the river!’

But to return to him, to my story I mean. I fear I am writing quite incoherently. The very Sunday after poor Mr. Newingham’s

abrupt dismissal, a candidate for the curacy preached, and oh, Annie! I was so surprised to find it was none other than that Mr. Stancliff—but perhaps you forget the name. I mean the gentleman in shabby black, with the torn cuff, whom we saw at Mr. Major's one day. Do you remember the circumstance? I am sure you must—it was on the 8th of June. The reason I remember it so well is, because you joked me so much about him. The surprise of seeing him, and the remembrance of having met him at the pawnbroker's once, together with the recollection of your jokes, made me grow quite scarlet, and I am almost sure that he looked at me, as he came down the pulpit stairs.

“He preached such a beautiful sermon, Annie, so different to Mr. Newingham's, so very different, but just as clever, or more so. The Squire went into the vestry to make his acquaintance, and brought him home to luncheon. He sat opposite me at table, and though we had not been introduced, spoke to me several times, and I am sure I made awkward, silly answers, for I felt that every one at the table was watching me. What an uncomfortable feeling that is!

“That evening Mrs. Ferrers sent for me

to her dressing-room, and desired me to give up curls, remarking that plain hair was much more modest and becoming for a young person in my situation. I have changed my style accordingly, though it does seem very strange not to leave me a free choice in such a trifle ; but I thought it best to yield.

“I am certain Mr. Stancliff knew me again ; I wonder whether he remembers the pawnbroker’s shop as well as I do ? Is it not very strange that I should meet him here ? By the bye, remember the spoons, Annie ; the man told me that if we did not pay back the money by the time the year was finished, that the spoons would be his, and he could sell them if he liked.

“Yes, it *is* very strange I should meet Mr. Stancliff here, and he is so amiable and pleasant, it is almost like seeing an old friend. He certainly must have known me, for he called me by my name as if it were quite familiar to him, and when he went away after luncheon the other day, he shook hands with me. How different Mr. Vincent looks to Mr. Stancliff ; the one so rough and uncouth, the other so gentle and polished. Do you know of whom he makes me think ?—of course I mean Mr. Stancliff—of Melancthon,

the gentle, elegant-minded Melancthon ! He is quite as clever as Mr. Newingham, and a thousand times more agreeable. I think too, that he will be useful, if he stays. I hope he will remain, if it does not hurt poor Miss Ellen's feelings. She would not go to church to hear him preach last Sunday, but went (on foot) four miles to the town, to St. Mary's, which is said to be Tractarian. Mr. Stancliff is not quite low church, but preaches practical sermons in beautiful, yet simple language ; the poorest hearer could understand him, and the most refined would discover nothing to offend their taste.

“ But what a thoroughly selfish letter I am writing ! and not a word about you, my dearest Annie ! What a comfort it is to me to think that you are in a nice family who can appreciate you, and spare you those cruel mortifications so often inflicted on a poor dependent. And yet, do you know, Annie, that sometimes I do not think you quite tell me all. At times I think you may have trials to endure which you heroically keep to yourself, while I—weak-minded, silly girl that I am—pain you by the recital of petty grievances. I will try for more courage !

“ Farewell, dearest, best of sisters ! guide,

counsellor, all and everything good and kind! I leave you to dive into Froissart. Despite what has lately happened, my spirits rise to-day like mercury in a July sun.

Your ever affectionate

“ELLEN.

“P.S.—It is decided Mr. Stancliff is to remain here. Every one is charmed with him, and Miss Ellen has most amiably promised to attend the church, in order to oblige her papa, though I can well understand that it will be a great trial to her, to see any one in Mr. Newingham’s place.

“You must not think from what I have said that I am unhappy at Elmgrove. I am not; indeed I am not. I become more contented every day, and should regret a change very much. The scenery round here is so beautiful, I should enjoy my walks extremely, if I were quite sure of never meeting Mr. Vincent. The two Miss Ferrers tease me still a good deal, but I do not now seem to feel it. Mr. Stancliff is a great favourite with them; sometimes he rides with them, and they frequently urge their papa to invite him to dinner.”

CHAPTER XVI.

SINCE we last peeped in at her, in her lonely schoolroom, a bright beam of sunshine has found its way through those thick, melancholy walls to cheer the solitary Annie Sherwood in her sterile path. She has found a jewel, to her of inestimable value, which sheds rays of light on her monotonous, uninteresting tasks ; and, reader, the governess's task is monotonous, is uninteresting, when she sees no fruit of her weary months of labour, no blossoms, no buds even, to promise fruit at a far distant day. Yes, Annie Sherwood's desert life has at last put forth a flower, a solitary prison flower, and she smiles on it fondly, like the man who watered and reared "Picciola." She is comforted by one sweet consoler—she chides herself that she has doubted of humanity, and grows reconciled to hourly trials. She has found a lover, perhaps, you think ? Oh, no ! but a warm-hearted, loving friend ; and the lonely girl throws all the earnest feelings of

her nature into a romantic friendship, which she dreams will last for life, and that friendship is to her in place of the love she has not known.

Annie came in one day from a solitary walk in the grounds of Locksley Lodge. In that walk she had met a lady who had looked at her very earnestly, and with an evident interest, in which no curiosity mingled; her face said plainly, "I should like to talk to you—I see you are lonely; so am I! Let us be friends." The stranger was not a beauty—most people would have called her plain; perhaps she was so, but Annie never saw it.

They had not spoken in words, but they had already conversed; Annie already loved the unknown, and her imagination immediately created for her, all the beauties we invariably discover in a loved face.

When the governess came straight from that pleasant meeting back to the school-room, so far removed from all the household, it did not look half so desolate. Nothing had been changed; there was still the same old-fashioned, half-faded furniture, the thrice-read book, the two or three shrivelled flowers, the still, cold silence—for the noisy

children were all out; but by some means the whole scene wore a new aspect. Perhaps it was that the rich sunset was throwing its dazzling beams into the chamber! No, no, it was not that; it was the kindly smile cast by a stranger on the lonely one which had lit her very soul within her, and that soul now threw the reflection of its own brightness on every surrounding object. Annie sat down by the window, and watched the gleaming of a white robe in the distance among the green trees, much as a lover would watch the new idol of his affections. She had a friend there—she was sure she had—the feeling was as delightful as it was new.

Geraldine rushed in, her plain face lit with a kind smile (for the child had a heart), and exclaimed, “See what some one has sent you! I am not going to tell you who!” and she put a fragrant bunch of lily-of-the-valley into Annie’s hand.

“You need not tell me, for I know,” said Annie, involuntarily pressing the flowers to her lips, as she burst into tears. “Ah, how ungrateful I have been to say there was no——”

“Do finish your sentence, Miss Sherwood!” said Geraldine, “do, pray, instead of crying!

That is such a provoking way of yours, breaking off in the middle of a speech. You are very, very disagreeable, and I wont tell you a word of the message, that I wont ; and you may guess it as well as you can !”

Annie was in too happy a mood for anger, or even remonstrating, and gently drew from Geraldine a message, which was to the effect that her aunt Antonia would be very glad to lend Miss Sherwood any books she had, and had sent her some flowers from her own garden.

From that day Annie's existence changed. She saw Antonia, and they immediately became friends ; in fact, they had been friends before.

Antonia was the youngest of the Oakley family, and had lived much in retirement. She was not handsome, not clever, not dashing, not attractive in any way, except to the few who knew her kind heart ; and her own people either knew it not, or were incapable of appreciating it, if they did know it. Antonia was three years younger than Annie Sherwood : if she did not possess actual talent, she had at least sufficient intelligence to appreciate a mind which she unenviously acknowledged to be deeper than her own.

As yet the quality of worldly-mindedness did not exist in Antonia, or it was wholly undeveloped. She did not enter into the full absurdity of forming a romantic friendship with a poor governess, whatever her friends might do; and in a very short time Annie Sherwood and she became like shadows of each other, and interchanged their thoughts with the frank ingenuousness of school-girls.

Together they read, thought, and felt; their happy intercourse existing without the shadow of envy on the part of the less gifted. Annie's labours became pleasanter to her; not that their nature had altered, not that her pupils' humours had changed, but that when the tasks were over, there would be a nice walk with Antonia, or a pleasant visit from her, during which the world's masquerading would not step in, to disguise a single thought of either ingenuous nature; during which Annie might fondly dwell on the praises of her young sister, talk freely of her hopes and fears for her, and even of her aspirations for herself, bold and daring as they were, for Annie knew her own powers. Antonia loved her, and enthusiastically shared her dreams.

When in after life, that confiding pair

became women of the world, and had learned to wear the mask that worldlings assume, perhaps each looked back with a sigh of regret to their trusting friendship; certainly one did, and bore about with her an abiding grief, that friendship, like love, is too often doomed to wear a thorn, when all its bright petals are withered.

In the fulness of her joy at having found a friend, Annie forgot the back staircase and the many indignities which had been offered her. When the Mr. Oakleys walked into the room wearing their hats, and seated themselves without one single word of courtesy (reader, the Mr. Oakleys were well-born gentlemen), if Annie felt indignant for a moment she stifled the feeling, for she could not be angry with Antonia's brothers. On the whole, though worried and worn-out by her pupils, neglected by their parents, insulted by their relations, Annie was happy, for she had a friend. Her evenings were pleasantly spent in reading books, with which Antonia's thoughtful kindness had provided her, or in imaginative compositions, in executing which she not only surrounded herself with beautiful beings of her own creation, but even by dreams that the crea-

tures of her fancy were destined for something more than an ephemeral existence.

In the midst of her newly-found contentment, Annie's peace was bitterly wounded by receiving a letter from Ellen, with which our readers are already acquainted. It appeared to her a thousand times more terrible that her sweet innocent sister should be insulted by unjust accusations, than it had appeared to Ellen herself; at least, Annie bore it much worse. She was almost frantic with indignation. Had it been herself, she might have borne it in silent bitterness of spirit, and derived some consolation from the little-mindedness of her accusers; but Ellen—her dear, modest Ellen—she who had been the light of their happy home and its idol!—she to be accused of impropriety! It was too much to endure. Annie instantly wrote, not only entreating Ellen to leave Elmgrove, but even laying her commands on her, as an elder sister might, to depart immediately. Ellen was to proceed to London, and, with Bertha's counsel and assistance, to place herself as a parlour-boarder in a school, Annie fancying—and it was but fancy—that her own moderate salary would supply all her sister's wants.

Of course Annie expected to meet with the ready compliance which Ellen was wont to show. She looked anxiously for a reply to her letter, quite certain that she should hear of her sister's being already in town. Her surprise was great, very great indeed, when, instead of the intelligence expected, she received an earnest, appealing letter from Ellen, entreating her to allow her to remain at Elmgrove, as she was so happy there! Her pupils were indeed rather wild; their mother had been unjust; but then the little things were improving in conduct, and she saw so little of the family, that they had no opportunity of annoying her; then Elmgrove was such a sweet place, she was growing quite attached to it. Ellen thought too, and she was quite sincere, that the ministry of Mr. Stancliff had been peculiarly blessed to her. Perhaps it had. Perhaps some other ladies of the Elmgrove congregation thought the same—one certainly did. Annie folded up the letter with a sigh, and sat for a long time holding it tightly between her hands, while her forehead rested on them, and she thought in dejected sorrow of her sister's possible fate—an unrequited attachment. Ellen was evi-

dently, however unconscious of the truth, becoming too deeply interested in the amiable curate; and that interest was heightened by the little romance of their meeting again at Elmgrove, after their first rencontre under peculiar circumstances.

“She must—she shall leave, before it is too late!” cried Annie, starting up and pacing the room. Then sitting down again, her head once more drooped on her hands, and she murmured, “No, no; let her stay and indulge her young dream of innocent romance! Love will be a heaven of light to her,—why should I forebode clouds to dim it? Ellen was born to love, I—only to dream that such things are!”

So Ellen stayed at Elmgrove, and months rolled on, and her letters were all so cheerful and happy, and daily she grew more attached to the beautiful scenery around!

CHAPTER XVII.

“DEAREST ANNIE,—After the letter which you wrote to me five months since, in which you told me to leave Elmgrove, I fully resolved not to pain you again by the useless recitals of those grievances which people in our position must expect to meet with, and which no doubt true Christians would bear with humility and resignation. I was very vexed with myself for having so grieved you with my selfish complaints, and determined that you should hear no more of them. I have been enabled for some time to keep my resolution, either by a change in myself or in my circumstances—which, I know not—but after the time I refer to, either I grew more contented, or my path less thorny. Yet now, Annie dear, I must again grieve you. Either I have returned to a murmuring spirit, or the thorns have grown up sharper than ever. And now I must really leave; I think there is no choice left me,—I must give warning, or receive it.

But I must tell you, coherently if I can, what has happened. About two months since, Mrs. Ferrers renewed her accusations of impropriety. What would our father have said—what would he have felt, to hear me thus accused! And then you will scarcely believe that Ellen Ferrers is my persecutor! I am overwhelmed at the discovery; she used to be so kind, and never at any time was haughty to me. But her manner is altered lately; not that she has been proud—no, she has no pride; but she has said so many unkind, cutting things, and even hinted that she considered me a religious hypocrite; but still I could not have believed that she would be the person to misrepresent my most innocent actions. She told Mrs. Ferrers that I was in the habit of walking by the river-side with Mr. Stancliff, and of corresponding with him. I declare to you, dear Annie, that it is not at all true. I have never done either; I will tell you the exact truth.

“Twice when wandering about in search of the children, who had, as they often do, run away from me, I met Mr. Stancliff, and on each occasion he very kindly insisted on hunting for them, while I sat down to rest,

after running till I was out of breath. Two or three times he has sent me books, and once I had a drawing of his to copy; and altogether he has been so kind, so very kind, that I really think he has done more to reconcile me to Elmgrove than any one else. And what was I to do, Annie? I could not be ungrateful when he offered to spare me fatigue by finding the children for me! I could not refuse the books, which he took the trouble to walk to the town to fetch me! I assure you, Annie, and I know you will believe me, there was no letter with the books, no note, not a line nor word of writing. But Mrs. Ferrers says—but listen, Annie, and try to be patient. Mrs. Ferrers sent for me. I went to her trembling, for I knew I was to hear something dreadful.

“ ‘Miss Sherwood,’ she exclaimed, ‘we must come to an understanding. I was in hopes that out of regard to your own interests, if not from principle, you would have avoided the recurrence of the improprieties with which I have already had to reproach you. Now pray don’t affect that look of surprise; you very well know what I mean. All counsel appears lost on you. You will force me to believe the doc-

trine, which my naturally soft feelings long made me reject, that young women only enter families as governesses, the more effectually to carry on their own base intrigues. Nay, that theatrical start, those clasped hands, those tears, are quite useless. I show kindness to my dependents always, till ingratitude calls forth a severity quite foreign to my nature.'

" 'But what have I done?' I at last exclaimed.

" 'What have you done? rather what have you not done! Not contented with artful endeavours to inveigle the affections of a mere youth—you well know I refer to Mr. Beresford—Miss Ferrers has detected you several times in cunning endeavours to attract Mr. Vincent's attentions.'

" 'Mr. Vincent! I detest the sight of Mr. Vincent!' I cried, I am afraid very passionately.

" 'Unless in the shrubbery, I suppose, Miss Sherwood!' said Miss Ferrers, entering, and looking very maliciously at me.

" 'And I suppose you equally detest Mr. Stancliff?' said Mrs. Ferrers, with a sneer.

" 'No, Madam, I respect and esteem him,' I replied, as firmly as I could.

“ ‘It is unfortunate,’ said Mrs. Ferrers, ‘that your conduct will not allow him to return the compliment. As it is, Miss Sherwood, I am constrained to tell you that Miss Ellen Ferrers informs me you are constantly throwing yourself in his path, joining in his walks, and even receiving letters from him, though you must be perfectly aware that no gentleman could offer a young person in your situation attentions which she ought to receive. I don’t wish to be severe on any one ; my servants can testify to my indulgence. Of course I don’t mean to say that a governess should not look forward to a settlement in life, as well as any one else ; but if she has any discretion at all, she will make no attempt to step out of her own class. Had Mr. Park been the person in question (Mr. Park is the village school-master), I might have thought the affair very suitable ; but one of the clergymen of the parish ! really your head must be completely turned by vanity, to have thought of such a thing ! As for Mr. Stancliff, if he has any thoughts of you, he must be insane to cut himself off from so many advantages. Of course he knows that if he were to marry beneath him, we could never ask him to our

table, where, under present circumstances, whenever there is a vacant place, we are glad to see a modest, unassuming young man. You may retire, and go to your duties, Miss Sherwood. See that you confine yourself to them; and remember, I must hear no more of these improper doings !’

“ I did retire, but firmly resolved that nothing should make me submit to such an attack again. At dinner, my eyes were red and swollen with weeping. Every one looked quite unconcerned except Mr. Ferrers, who asked if I had a cold, and gave me a glass of wine; perhaps he did not know I was in disgrace.

“ I have been very careful since to avoid Mr. Stancliff, but he looks sorry and vexed, and I feel quite unhappy at seeming ungrateful to one who has been so very kind to me, and—but it is no use continuing.

“ No, dear Annie, I will not accept your generous offer of long ago. I will not live at ease on the fruit of your toil, but will try for employment; perhaps I shall be happier in my next engagement.

“ I shall immediately write a note to Mrs. Ferrers, and give her warning. I do not feel that I have courage to talk to her. I

am a sad coward ! I have so little of what people call spirit ; in lieu of it, I must strive and pray for Christian resignation, and a heart to forgive.

“ Dear Annie, don’t be unhappy about me ; I am sorry to leave Elmgrove, for, with all their waywardness, I love the children (there is always something to love in children), and I shall regret Mr. Stancliff’s ministry ; but if it be God’s will for me to depart, I shall try to make it my will too.

“ This is a beautiful country ! I never thought it so beautiful till I found I must leave it. Mr. Stancliff draws ; he has promised to make a sketch of the church for me ; at least, he did promise the last time I spoke to him, but that is very long ago. The church is very pretty, many centuries old, with a tapering spire which, rising from a cluster of dark trees, points to Heaven like hope rising amid life’s sombre cares. I can’t help loving this place. How strange that one should love a place in which they have suffered ! But then I have been happy too sometimes, at Elmgrove, and I am not sure, taking them all together, whether my bright days would not outnumber my dark ones. I often wonder why people count up

the rainy days, and talk so little of the sunny ones, though they are so much more numerous; to-night I think I shall give my warning, that is, if I can find courage!

“I am just going to hang up the old shawl that has so long been my curtain, but it seems a sin to shut up the window that shows so beautiful a scene. The moon is shining on the landscape; I can see in the distance the ‘heaven-directed spire,’ close by it is the Rectory. Mr. Stancliff lives with the Rector. I can fancy I see him studying now by the light of the holy stars, his pale, thoughtful face raised to heaven!

“Oh, Annie! I have something to tell you, but I cannot write it, indeed I cannot. Do you know that I am tempted, yes, strongly tempted, to bear all these insults, and stay at Elmgrove, but I will strive against the weakness.

“Your loving sister,
“ELLEN.”

CHAPTER XVIII.

“DEAREST ANNIE,—Do not be vexed with me when I tell you that, notwithstanding your earnest wishes and my own determined resolves, I foolishly hesitated to give the letter of warning to Mrs. Ferrers; indeed, I have kept putting it off.

“I had written the intended note, but it lay in my desk day after day, and though I well knew how weak and silly I was, I kept saying, ‘To-morrow I will put it on Mrs. Ferrers’ table; but the time never came; yet I did not know my own reasons for this vacillating folly—perhaps I had no reason but want of courage. I have been well punished for my cowardice, as you will see, dear Annie. One day last week I walked out with the children before breakfast. We had not gone very far, when I felt both the little things suddenly snatch their hands from mine, and before I could speak they were off like arrows, and shouting with merry laughter. I called after them in

vain; they were soon out of sight and hearing. I often lose them thus, for two or three hours. I ran as quickly as I could in the direction they had taken, scarcely hoping to find the truants, but not daring to return without them! I was soon beyond the grounds of Elmgrove. I met several poor people, and asked if they had seen the children. 'Yes, they had only just passed that way.' I encountered Mr. Stancliff coming out of a cottage; he seemed to understand what my business was, and asked if he could help me. I could not answer, but shook my head and rushed on, leaving him in the road, looking after me with wonder! At that minute the clock struck the hour at which we always breakfast, and Mrs. Ferrers likes us to be in at the exact time. (The children breakfast with her; I quite alone in the school-room.) I well knew that I should be blamed for their not appearing, so I hastened on; quite wearied and out of breath, I found myself at the entrance of a little wood. From within I heard the mischievous laugh of little Franky; I was in hopes that the children were turning back; but no, I called till I was quite exhausted, and they answered, but they led me

such a weary chase for half an hour longer, that at last (I am ashamed to confess it) I leant against a tree and burst into tears. I soon dried them, however, when I heard some one approaching. Annie, it was that hateful Mr. Vincent, and he came up to me with the most impertinent smile.

“ ‘What, in tears, my charming Ellen!’ he exclaimed, drawing nearer as I involuntarily retreated from his disagreeable presence. ‘Come, don’t fret,’ he added, attempting to draw my hand through his arm; ‘these little rogues have led you a nice chase, but I can’t find in my heart to be angry with them, since they have procured me what I have so long wanted—the opportunity of telling you how much I adore you, and of telling it, too, in this charming solitude. Come, we won’t leave it yet; let us take a turn this way. The children have gone home through the village; you won’t be missed, at least not directly, and when you go back, you can say you lost your way, you know! Very likely you may slip in unobserved. We can part before we come in sight of the house, and no one will know that——’

“ ‘Let me go, sir!’ I exclaimed; ‘I wish to have nothing to do with you; let me go!’

“ ‘I see how it is,’ he said, confidently, and still holding my hand so tightly that I could not withdraw it. ‘You are jealous of that fright, Sophy Ferrers; but you little know me! I am only civil to her in case I should one day find myself constrained to marry her, or her tin, rather! You need not pout, for if I did, it could make no difference in my feelings for you!’

“ ‘Your feelings are of no consequence to me, sir,’ I replied; ‘you have none belonging to a gentleman or man of honour, or you would not thus insult me!’

“ ‘Well, I had no idea you could look so vixenish, but ’pon my honour it rather becomes you,’ he cried; ‘why, you silly child, what have I said or done to insult you? You’re really too romantic! I want nothing in the world from you, but that you should take a turn with me in the wood, give me two or three kisses from those pretty lips, and keep your own counsel and mine. No one need be the wiser, if you’re only discreet, and you’d see, I could meet you afterwards without any one suspecting that we had ever exchanged a word in our lives. See what I have brought you from London, you little vixen!’ and he thrust a glittering ring into

the hand that was free. I am afraid, Annie, that I have become very wicked, for what do you think I did? Return him the ring? No, I threw it with all my force over the bank into the river; while he, though still detaining me, uttered an angry exclamation; but cooling down, he added, ‘After all, as I find you’ve so much pluck, I think I’d rather win your love than buy it!’

“‘My love!’ said I; ‘I hate, despise, loathe you!’

“‘No, no, I’m sure you don’t,’ he replied; ‘give me a kiss, and let us be friends. ’Pon my life I’d rather win you than the Derby!’

“‘It is plain I have no protector!’ I exclaimed, in great misery, as I found the insulting villain attempting to kiss me, despite all my efforts to frustrate his intentions; but oh, Annie, what were my feelings of joy and gratitude when I heard a well-known voice calling out loudly, ‘Yes, yes, you have one!’ and at the same minute Mr. Vincent staggered, and fell down heavily, from a blow across his face, while Mr. Stancliff stood beside me, trying to soothe me with the kindest words and looks; and I found myself, though trembling with many conflicting feelings, clinging to his arm, as if he

had been my brother all my life ! He made no attempt to move away from the spot, but stood still, as if waiting for Mr. Vincent to rise, which he slowly did, looking very like what one fancies a bad spirit, a very personification of malice and hatred.

“ ‘ Your cloth shall prove no protection to you, sir,’ he muttered, while his mouth was bleeding profusely, which frightened me very much, though I own it was more from fear of the consequences to my kind preserver, than from any pity for that wicked man. ‘ What I dare do, I dare justify, sir,’ said Mr. Stancliff, with great dignity. ‘ But did I need or desire protection, I should be amply provided with it in your cowardice. The man who would take advantage of her friendless situation to insult an unprotected girl, would scarcely have the courage to boast of his exploits!’ So saying, he turned and led me away. But grateful as I was to Mr. Stancliff for his kindness, I dreaded the conclusion of the walk. He would not leave me till I reached the house. On the way there he said everything he could think of to console me and quiet my fears. But kind as he was, his manner was so full of grave respect, that I felt he was trying to efface

the remembrance of the mortifying insult I had just received. As we walked along, Mr. Stancliff told me that he was in the habit of taking an early morning walk every day; that in those rambles he had often seen me, but had never ventured to speak or approach me, lest his doing so should excite disagreeable remarks, for he had long noticed that the Ferrers' family did not treat me with kindness and consideration. He told me too (though at the same time he begged my pardon for having misconstrued my conduct so far), that he had been both surprised and pained, at seeing me enter the wood alone that morning, and Mr. Vincent immediately after, as it made him fear that our meeting was not wholly accidental. Of course I explained to him as well as I could, what had led to the unfortunate meeting with Mr. Vincent, and he seemed quite satisfied with my account.

“Mr. Stancliff then asked me, only hesitatingly, why I had avoided him so much lately. I believe I looked quite silly and confused, but it was of course impossible to answer the question by telling him all, or even a part of what Mrs. Ferrers had

said on the subject of my acquaintance with him.

“ When we reached the house, he said, hurriedly, ‘ I cannot bid you good-bye now. I have much more to say, but our walk has been so hurried, I could not tell you all. But you will let me go in with you? I must see Mr. Ferrers on your account; indeed I must!’ he added, earnestly; and he held my hand in his while he spoke, but so differently to Mr. Vincent, that I could not feel offended. ‘ I know,’ he continued, ‘ the unpleasant scene that awaits you with those heartless women; perhaps there may be even some misrepresentations from that miscreant. I cannot bear you to brave the storm alone! Dear Ellen, let me shield you from it!’ Perhaps it would have been better if I had yielded to his kind wishes; but as it was, I earnestly intreated him to forego his intentions. I was so afraid of his injuring himself; and felt that I would rather endure anything, than occasion his receiving rudeness, perhaps insult. Besides, I dreaded hearing a repetition of Mrs. Ferrers’ charges, and they would be probably made in his presence, if he accompanied me. Mr. Stan-

cliff reluctantly gave up the point, and departed, taking leave of me more like an affectionate though respectful friend, than a comparatively recent acquaintance.

“I went in, you may be sure with a beating heart, and hastening up-stairs found I was an hour beyond my time, and that Ellen Ferrers was seated in my place, teaching the children. ‘Miss Sherwood!’ she exclaimed, in a very harsh voice, ‘so you have at length returned! Perhaps it will be agreeable to you to perform a portion of your duties yourself! The salary you receive might surely entitle us to expect that your office would be a little more conscientiously fulfilled. But this is, I suppose, your view of religious obligation; this, your exemplification of faith and practice! I am obliged to do your work, while you are wandering in the green shades with a sentimental curate. You need not deny it,’ she added, in a very shrill voice, ‘for you were seen! Happily, your career in this quarter will soon be stopped however! Mrs. Ferrers has authorized me to tell you that you leave the house the moment your quarter ends; before indeed, if you attempt a renewal of this morning’s scenes. And as for Mr.

Stancliff, he had better beware how he acts ; after having had the presumption to pay his addresses to me, it is going rather too far to transfer them to our dependent, though I don't doubt the least that your artifices rather than inclination, have drawn him on to act absurdly ! You need not attempt an explanation ; I will not listen to any : nor need you try to see mamma ; she has promised to leave the business entirely in my hands. One word of advice I give you, though—stop short before your reputation is quite gone. Remember, as Mrs. Ferrers said, no gentleman would or could marry you !' I saw indeed, that I should be allowed no opportunity of justifying myself, so I merely replied that if I had not received warning, I meant to have given it ; indeed, had written a note to Mrs. Ferrers on the subject, though I had not yet given it to her. She told me plainly she did not believe a word I said, so I gave her the note, which she opened, read, and then tore up. The perusal seemed to make her more and more angry. She continued talking in a violent tone for some time, without suffering me to reply, but was interrupted by Miss Ferrers, who rushed in,

exclaiming, 'Poor Francis has been thrown from his horse, and had three of his front teeth knocked out! Do come, Ellen, and stop Sophy's meddling; she will do him much more harm than good. Pray do come, and leave that creature!' A few minutes after, I heard Miss Ferrers and her sister Sophia quarrelling violently. Ellen tried to pacify them, and her endeavours were met with the ill-natured remark, 'You know you're only spiteful because Mr. Stancliff has been making love to that little fright upstairs. You're just like the ox in the manger, Ellen; you can't have him yourself, and—' I did not hear the rest of that speech, but involuntarily caught enough to show me that Mr. Vincent had forged a tale of being thrown from his horse, to account for the state, in which the well-merited chastisement he had received from Mr. Stancliff, had placed him; but I had quite made up my mind that I would explain everything before I left the house.

"I tried to be patient with the children at their lessons that day, though they had occasioned all the mischief. But after all, the fault is not really theirs when they get one thus into trouble; they have been so badly

trained that they are beyond all authority, and I have too little firmness and dignity to counteract their previous bad training by commanding obedience and respect.

“I am sure it is a great mistake, a very great mistake, for poor gentlewomen to become governesses, unless they have suitable talents, and have been regularly taught their profession. I am sure I wish to do my duty, and I love children too much to be unkind to them, but I want management and decision; they see that I do, and treat me as a playmate, while their friends treat me as—alas, I cannot say what! but if I were to stay here, my heart would be broken.

“Yet I have not told you all, Annie! Are not dark and sunny skies strangely blended? Even while I write of injustice and oppression, there is a glow of happiness in my heart which the darkest memories could not wholly shadow.

“Only think, Annie! your simple little sister, with neither mind nor talent, with little to engage, and much to condemn in her feeble character, is loved by the most superior of men!

“But you will be better pleased if I tell

things in order. Yesterday evening, to my great surprise the footman knocked at the school-room door, and then looking behind him, as if he had some secret message to deliver, pushed a letter into my hands, saying, 'I fancy, Miss, here's something you'll be glad to get, and as I've been paid handsome for being postman, I've run the risk of bringing it to you. But I hope you'll be prudent, and keep things nice and snug, for as sure as you're alive, if Miss Sophy finds us out (and she's as cunning as a cat) *it'll cost you and me our places!*'

"*You* would have found a ready answer for such a speech, but I was too much stupefied to reply, and when he went away, I had not the least notion of the man's errand. The letter proved to be from Mr. Vincent, and contained proposals even beyond the insults he had already offered me. Every indignant feeling in my nature was roused; so thoroughly did I feel exasperated, on finding that the lesson enforced by the oaken stick was not enough for him, that in the first moments of resentment, I was going to carry the letter straight to Mr. Ferrers. Perhaps I ought to have done so, but after a little calmer thought, I resolved to leave him to

that vengeance, which sooner or later overtakes the guilty.

“This morning, dear Annie, has brought me another letter, so different, so widely different from that wicked Mr. Vincent’s! I was so surprised, so frightened too, though my fright was of a joyful nature, to think that I,—poor little insignificant Ellen Sherwood, should—but I am growing quite incoherent again! My letter was from Mr. Stancliff, and he told me, Annie, that he loved me, and hoped I would one day be his wife! His wife—I can scarcely believe it possible; I feel so unworthy of such a destiny! He is so immeasurably my superior. Only fancy your little Ellen the wife of a learned, eloquent man!

“He seems to feel sure I will accept him, and yet he is the last man in the world who would be vain or conceited. Perhaps he has found out that I think him superior to everybody else, but I hope not, lest he should fancy me forward, and seeking his attentions, as the Miss Ferrers say I am. I assure you, dear Annie, I have done nothing wrong, at least I hope not, and if he has discovered my partiality, it must be because I have been myself ignorant of its existence.

“He says that he is resolved to leave this place immediately ; that he has the offer of a better curacy in Somerset, and that in a few months he hopes to have a home to offer me. He adds so kindly, ‘You must bring me a sister, as well as a bride, my Ellen!’ Oh, Annie, how happy we shall be together again ! for I know you will come to us as he wishes, and for ever leave the stranger’s home ! Are not these blessed prospects too, too blessed for my deserts ? How pleasantly we shall spend our days ! Surely it will be heaven begun !

“Richard says (I love to write his name, and yet tremble at my own presumption when I do so) that he is sorry he struck Mr. Vincent. *I* cannot think he was at all wrong ; but he thinks he should have contented himself with protecting me, and have left him to heaven and his own conscience.

“But, dear Annie ! the strangest thing of all, and to me the sweetest surprise, has been to recognise in Richard Stancliff’s writing that of our unknown benefactor, the person who so unostentatiously came to our assistance when we might, but for that providential succour, have perished with want.

“You remember the words that accom-

panied the note?—‘He feedeth the young ravens,’ &c. I shall not venture to tell him of my discovery, of which I am sure he would rather not hear, though I long to find out how he knew all about us and our circumstances.

“He says he will not try to see me again till after I have left here, lest he should render the rest of my sojourn more uncomfortable. But nothing now will make me unhappy! Every one in the house is set against me; but I have love, and hope, and happiness, and, I humbly trust, Heaven too on my side, and with supports and shields like these, I shall be invulnerable. I do not—will not believe that Richard ever paid his addresses to Ellen Ferrers; but she looks very miserable—and had she not lately, so very lately, been attached to Mr. Newingham, I should think she loved him.

“I have a fortnight more to spend here. I shall try and keep our engagement a secret, lest it should pain her; but I am afraid that some of the happiness I feel, will shine out in my face. Fortunately, I don’t go downstairs to dinner now: the children do; but all my meals are sent up to me from the kitchen.

“I ought to have shown you Richard’s letter first, dear Annie—I mean before I answered it—and asked your advice; but he begged so much for an immediate reply, that I could not keep him waiting. But I gave him your address, and asked him to write to you, to confirm what I had told him. Have I been wrong, Annie? I hope you will not think so.

“I am doing all I can to fulfil my duties to the last; but it is a hard task to teach these poor, spoiled children. Still I am sorry to leave them, for love grows up in one’s heart for even the wayward, before we know it, and these little ones have really kindly natures, if they were well directed.

“Your affectionate ELLEN.

“P.S. to this already overgrown letter, written three days since.—Don’t think I am unhappy; Elmgrove itself has no power now to make me so. I am strangely strengthened against unkindness, but really the petty persecutions of Ellen Ferrers must task her invention to devise. Mr. Vincent is staying in the house; he is better, but suffering a good deal from the rough chastisement received in the wood. He and his cousin Ellen, formerly so opposed in every-

thing, are now confederated on one point—that of turning Mr. Stancliff into ridicule ; it is envy in the one, and malice—I am afraid jealousy—in the other. Whenever Richard is the subject of discourse, they seem to raise their voices on purpose for me to hear. He preached such a beautiful sermon on Sunday, Annie ; our dear father would have liked it so much (I often think how he and Richard would have loved and appreciated each other). The text was, ‘Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth.’ It seemed to rebuke me for being too happy, when he spoke of the uncertain nature of the deepest happiness arising from earthly causes. Several times he repeated, ‘here we have no abiding city.’ I thought he looked sorrowful and grieved about something, but I did not dare to look up a second time ; I felt as if every eye were upon me. One pair was, and they looked as if they would read my soul—Ellen Ferrers’. She was seated directly opposite to me, and was quite pale and agitated. Certainly she loves Mr. Stancliff, and I must pity her, and forgive the wrongs which jealous love has made her inflict on me. Oh, Annie, it is so easy to forgive every one now ! My heart is too full of happiness to hold resentment.

Dear, dear Annie! when I remember how soon we are to be restored to each other, I am too happy! It seems as if some reverse must come; but I will not think of that, the present is so cloudless and joyful! Bless you, my dear, kind sister."

CHAPTER XIX.

ANNIE SHERWOOD read her sister's last letter with conflicting emotions; and while she rejoiced at her bright prospects (for it never occurred to her that a curacy was a very poor provision), she yet felt a brief pang at the thought of henceforth holding a secondary place in Ellen's heart, for hitherto she had been all in all to her. But Annie's nature was too generous to allow that jealous pain to endure long, and she soon woke to a sense of happiness such as she had not known for years, when she remembered that the cruel yoke which Ellen had so meekly borne in the house of the stranger was so soon to be broken, and that for ever.

How merrily Annie's laugh rang through the room when Geraldine began thus: "Do you know, Miss Sherwood, you don't look quite so ugly to-day—indeed you don't!"

"Don't I?"

"No, that you don't! Now, if you would only stop like that, I should like to run

down and fetch up Uncle Hal, that he might see you're not quite so frightful as he thinks. I know he is down stairs, for I just now put my eye to the key-hole, and my ear too, and—— But it's no use my going; you're quite ugly again! I see you don't want to look pretty."

"I don't care very much about it, Geraldine."

"But I do, Miss Sherwood, and I like pretty people. Joseph (the footman) is very handsome, and I like him. Oh, how I wish he would marry me when I'm big! Don't you wish he would marry you? I'm sure you do!"

Then Annie's unwonted joyousness was clouded by a futile effort to convince the poor spoiled child that honour and duty alike forbade her peeping and listening at key-holes, and propriety equally condemned her familiarity with a handsome young footman. To the latter observation Geraldine certainly made a very natural and logical reply. "My uncles always talk and laugh with the maids; why shouldn't I with the footman?" Ere the argument concluded, Antonia entered.

"A new book for you, Minnie!" said she, holding up a fresh-looking volume to her

friend, for whom she had adopted the pet-name of Minnie.

“But what has happened? You are between tears and sunshine.”

“The sunshine is from within,” said Annie, smiling, “and I have good reason to hope will prove permanent; the tears are but a passing shower.”

Antonia was surprised at Annie’s unwonted cheerfulness; but she understood from her air that, though she had something pleasant to tell her, she did not wish to speak before the talkative Geraldine. So the friends began to talk of books, and the child, after lingering awhile, and finding nothing that passed would be available as retail gossip, departed to seek amusement elsewhere.

When the door was shut, Annie freely poured forth her joyous tidings, but was rather disappointed to find that Antonia did not view Ellen’s prospects in as bright a light as she did. The reason was obvious. Antonia had always been accustomed to easy circumstances, though not to actual wealth; while Annie’s only experience was of very slender means, or of actual poverty. To Antonia it seemed a very poor thing to marry a curate.

“Only a curate!” said she.

“But then, Mr. Stancliff is such a good and superior man,” said Annie, warmly; “and Ellen will be so happy with him! Is not that the chief thing to be thought of?”

“Oh, of course, dear Minnie,” said Antonia; “of course, to be happy is the principal thing. But how are they to live on a curacy?”

“By economy and care.”

“Well, perhaps they may manage,” said Antonia, doubtingly. “There is one thing to be said, they’ll have you to help and advise them.”

“No,” said Annie, sighing; “I shall not live with them. I must not decrease their small means; besides, I must preserve my independence.”

“Your independence! Poor Minnie!” said Antonia, who had seen enough to estimate the value of a governess’s independence; but seeing the train of thought her exclamation excited, she kindly turned the conversation to other matters.

“So you think they will be able to manage on about a hundred a year?”

“I am sure they will,” said Annie; “and they shall have my stipend to help them out. But you look sad, Antonia!”

“I was only thinking,” said Antonia, “what I should do if I were married to a poor man. I should be utterly helpless.”

“But I would teach you to keep house,” said Annie, “in return for all the pains you have taken to teach me a little French.”

Antonia, although not naturally very industrious, had for the last few weeks been making really Herculean efforts to teach Annie something of the language in which she was so deficient, and for the want of which, not all her classical knowledge could compensate.

Antonia Oakley was one of those rare mortals who do not over-estimate themselves. She felt quite confused and ashamed at the thought of possessing any one advantage over Annie Sherwood. Ah, Antonia, thine was a simple, lovely nature! Couldst thou have been transplanted to a healthier, worthier soil! for the world was not worthy of thee; yet it has gathered thee into its vortex, and thy nature is marred, thou art become of the world, worldly! But, Antonia, if thine eyes fall upon this page, if thou seest thyself mirrored therein, let the remembrance of thy early, single-minded friendship snatch thee away one moment from the

heartless, and remember Annie Sherwood. Sweet Antonia! the lonely governess who, consoled by thy gentle friendship, grew reconciled to life, still thanks thee for the pleasant past, and forgives the weakness that constrained thy unwilling heart to inflict a pang on hers, by forsaking her for the world's opinion! Early friendship has all the beautiful romance of early love!

Antonia and Annie talked for a long time of Ellen's prospects, till Antonia grew quite persuaded that a curacy, with a rustic porch shaded by woodbine, was the only fit substitute for Eden, since Eden was lost; and Annie dwelt with more pride than became the subject, on Ellen's deep piety, which would shine forth so beautifully in a sphere for which she was born.

All that interested Annie had an equal interest for Antonia, and day after day wore away in the pleasant expectation of the friends being enabled more fully to estimate Mr. Stancliff's character, when they should have read his anxiously expected letter to Annie; but the letter came not.

Ellen wrote to say that she had left Elmgrove; she was in London, boarding at a cheap school, where, as the period likely to

elapse between that time and her marriage would probably be short, she hoped to remain till it took place. She hoped too, that Annie would soon join her, and was anxious to know what she thought of Richard's letter, which she was sure had been received.

Annie delayed her reply to Ellen for a week, and then a second week, still hoping to hear from the intended bridegroom; but no missive came. Two months slipped away, and no tidings arrived! Annie grew vexed, and her pride was chafed. She thought her sister trifled with and forgotten. Ellen's letters betrayed neither resentment nor mortified vanity. She had perfect confidence in her lover. She was sure, quite sure, that he had been prevented writing by illness, or some other cause over which he had no control.

When the third month of silence was past, she quite gave him up; he was dead, certainly dead. A few weeks of quiet sorrow, and Ellen began to reproach herself for her inactivity. She would not remain unemployed while Annie was labouring. Annie was content to labour herself, but not at all satisfied that Ellen should return to the kind of life she had led at Elmgrove. She

therefore strenuously combated her sister's resolution; but Ellen had heard of an engagement, and thought she ought to take what offered.

The Emersons were not the least like the Ferrers family; no, they were deeply religious people; with them she could not fail to find happiness.

The family consisted of three little girls and one boy. The father, a gentleman of private fortune, devoted himself entirely to going about doing good. The mother, a great invalid, never went out, or very seldom, but she exercised the most unbounded benevolence. They invited Ellen to spend a week with them, and though she could not but notice that a melancholy atmosphere pervaded the house, she was so pleased with her reception that she wrote to Annie, "Don't oppose my going to these really Christian people! Such an air of peace and quiet fills their home; it will be a heaven after Elmgrove!"

So Annie yielded, and Ellen went into Buckinghamshire; sorrowful, indeed, but much more sorrowful for the uncertain fate of her lover than for the rude dispersion of her first love-dream. Meekly resigned to do

and suffer all God's will, and fully resolved to exert herself to the utmost for the conscientious discharge of her duties, Ellen could not be really unhappy ; but Annie was unhappy for her ; yes, and even angry for her, too !

Her own occupations were becoming more agreeable. Her pupils, though spoiled and wayward, were insensibly beginning to feel the influence of her teaching. Had Mr. and Mrs. Maberly renounced a little, nay, a very little, of their overweening pride in her favour, they would have rendered their dependent not only contented with her lot, but even grateful for it. Such a sacrifice was not to be thought of for a moment ! Mr. Maberly was an amiable man—no one could call him otherwise ; strictly honourable, sometimes even generous ; but much that was excellent in him was marred by one unfortunate mania, a mania to take a position in society for which neither his connexions (though they were highly respectable) nor his attainments (though they were of average merit) fitted him. He did not, like Yussuf, exclaim, “I am Yussuf, the water-carrier, and as a water-carrier I will live and die !” but his countenance, bearing,

habits, all loudly proclaimed, "I am striving to live among the great and as do the great, and with that sole ambition I will live and die!"

Like the man in the play, Mr. Maberly adored a lord, and doted on a duke. He would certainly have given a considerable part of his substance to see his name in print among the guests at a *réunion* in the fashionable world. Foolish Mr. Maberly! he would cringe to a set of men equally beneath him in character and conduct, lend them money, do their bidding blindly, with no other recompence than having it said that he was the intimate friend of the Marquis of ———, or like a brother with Lord R—— L——!

Au reste, Mr. Maberly had really few faults; just, honourable, kind-hearted, ready to bestow help on the needy, he would not have inflicted the least injury on any one. He was an indulgent, generous master, and would no doubt have been polite and considerate to his children's governess, if he had not feared that he might thereby lose caste!

When he was not in attendance on his noble friends, Mr. Maberly lived in dignified solitude. There were scarcely any

families in the neighbourhood with whom he could associate on equal terms. Some were self-made men; others did not know who their grandfathers were. When reduced to solitude, Mr. Maberly studied, and apparently studied very hard; not the classics, however, but the Peerage. He knew the descent, the intermarriages, the emblazonment of all the peers of England. The Peerage, in fact, so absorbed his mental powers, that though he sometimes read other books, he seldom remembered them; in fact, to leave clear space for his darling subject, he seemed, like Hamlet, to have wiped from his "memory, all foolish, fond records." It was sad that a good heart like Mr. Maberly's should have been wasted by thus tenaciously clinging to the skirts of a world, from which fortune, position, and nature had separated him!

With greater intelligence, and consequently greater responsibility, Mrs. Maberly pursued the same course as her husband. She too, aimed high, but less successfully, for he often found ingress when she did not, and yet her appearance and manner were far more aristocratic than his. But then, she did not lend money; perhaps she had not

thought of it as a *passe partout*, perhaps she had not sufficient at her command. She was very benevolent to the poor, and gave freely of what she had. She encouraged her children to relieve the wants of the indigent; and if she taught them no other virtue, the lesson of generosity was given by precept and example. But Mrs. Maberly forgot that charity is something more than relieving the physical wants of the necessitous. She knew nothing, positively nothing, of the large-hearted charity which, calling all mankind by the name of brother, is tenderly careful even of the feelings of others. A kinder mistress than Mrs. Maberly never existed, but it would have been vulgar to show any attention to "the governess," and quite degrading to associate with her!

And besides wishing to do as the great world did, Mrs. Maberly had a particular aversion to bringing any one into contact with her who might draw attention from herself, or share with her that which she received. So the governess must remain shut up in that room at the top of the house. Certainly she wanted for nothing. There was an excellent dinner sent up there every day. She had a good supper too, and a

tea-caddy, with a key in her own possession. "What more could she want! Lonely? Nonsense! She is fond of reading. We lend her plenty of books; and if the men are rather boorish, it is only the penalty that ugliness must pay. Has she not plenty of consolation in the sentimental friendship of Antonia? Come down-stairs, indeed? No, indeed she shan't. If she is not satisfied, we can find plenty to replace her!"

CHAPTER XX.

“ ONLY think, Miss Sherwood, we’re going to London !” exclaimed Miss Geraldine, rushing into the school-room one day. “ Going to stay there the whole season ; but perhaps you don’t know what the season means, as you’re so poor, and have always lived in the country, and your papa was not a gentleman. Why, how you colour ! Have I said any harm ? I really didn’t know it, if I did say anything to offend you ; and I’m sorry too, for I do love you when we’re not at lessons, though you are so ugly ! Ah ! you’re laughing ! Now you’re not ugly at all. Aren’t you very glad we’re going to London ?”

“ Not very.”

“ But London is so gay, Miss Sherwood !”

“ It will make very little difference to me,” said the governess ; “ very little indeed.”

“ Oh yes, it will make a difference ! You won’t be so lonely there. I know you are

here; and I've often asked mamma to let you come down-stairs. Perhaps she will when we're in town, as my uncles wont be there. She says you could not come where they are. In London she'll often let you go out, and let you take us to see sights; that will make you happy, I'm sure."

"But I have no taste for sight-seeing, and I like the country best," said Annie, who was saddened by the prospect of leaving Antonia.

"Well, you are the strangest person that ever lived!" said Geraldine. "Not care for sight-seeing! Not care for London! We shall walk in the Park, and see so many people; not St. James's—vulgar people go there—but Hyde Park. All the people of rank go to Hyde Park, Miss Sherwood! You didn't know that before, I dare say. Did I ever tell you my godmother was a countess?"

"Yes, a great many times, Geraldine; but you never told me whether she was a nice, kind, amiable woman."

"She is not a woman, Miss Sherwood; she's a lady, a lady of rank; did I not tell you she was a countess? As to her being amiable, I don't know, for I never saw her.

Oh, yes! I did once; but so long ago. Oh, here comes Aunt Antonia! She is really very ugly; almost as ugly as you, Miss Sherwood, and doesn't even look handsome when she smiles. Now, don't put on that grave face. I am saying no harm of her, I am sure. Mamma lets me say and do all I like; and so must you if you want me to love you! I shall get quite good presently, if you let me have all my own way. Have I not already begun to read some Bible every day (though I hate it), only to please you?"

Antonia entered without her usual smile. She had learned that she was to lose her companion and friend; one who her partial friendship taught her to believe could not soon be replaced, and her heart felt sad; while Annie could not restrain the tears of regret for their approaching separation.

"But we shall meet again in a few months, dear Minnie," said Antonia.

"But not as now," replied Annie. "You will have seen something more of the outer world by that time, Antonia, and will perhaps learn to smile at your friendship for a poor dependent."

"I wish you wouldn't conjure up such

dreadful things!" said Antonia. "Why pain your own mind by constantly recurring to your situation? Why, dear Minnie, wrong me, by supposing that my feelings towards you could change? No one in the world could ever be to me what you have been, and are," she added tenderly, embracing Annie. "Come, tell me that you believe all I say, Minnie!"

"Most implicitly," said Annie, seriously. "So implicitly, that if I find you changed, it will break—or harden my heart."

"Nothing in me shall wilfully occasion you a moment's pain," replied Antonia. "I have found in you what I have all my life desired, but never possessed till now, a sympathising friend. Do you think I will voluntarily resign such a prize? No! when you are gone, I scarcely know how I shall be able to pass the hours you have made so pleasant. But you will write to me often, dear Minnie?"

"Very, very often!"

"And you will tell me everything?"

"Yes, positively everything. But you know my world is in books, so I must often talk to you of imaginary characters, places, and things."

“Never mind; all you talk about will be pleasant to me. You will advise me what is best to be done for the poor; you will tell me what books to read, will give me your own thoughts upon them. You will tell me too, of all you write, and thus I shall become acquainted with the creatures of your imagination.”

“And you, Antonia! You will write me nice long letters, and very often?”

“Indeed I will; but you must promise me to take care of yourself, for your sister’s sake and for mine!”

“For her dear sake and yours, I will,” said Annie. “I live for no one else.”

“There is no single vision of my future life with which you are not mingled,” said Antonia; “no plans for days to come, in which I do not see you joining. You will not distrust me again, Minnie?”

“Never!” said Annie, warmly.

The friends parted then, and Annie spent an hour in composing some pathetic verses to her dear Antonia, which when they came to be read over in after years, Annie found out to be very bad poetry, and Antonia probably discovered that the sentiments they

expressed were as absurd as the composition was defective !

Antonia Oakley enjoyed a small independence, but it was not spent in selfish indulgence or in trifles. A large part of her income went to relieve the unfortunate. It was Annie Sherwood's chief pleasure to go through the adjoining village, examine into the wants of the poor, and report their cases to her friend, who never failed to answer the appeal by granting help to the sufferers. Sometimes it was warm flannel for a rheumatic old man, sometimes coal for a shivering family, sometimes better food for the sick than their penury would permit them to obtain for themselves. And all Antonia's charities were so sweetly, so modestly dispensed, all her gifts so free from ostentation and display !

Sweet Antonia ! whose early life was so beautiful in charity and friendship—sweet Antonia ! why didst thou let the unfeeling world rudely break the bands of a friendship cemented by such holy charities !

The journey to London was through a monotonous, uninteresting country—those counties which Dr. Arnold (essentially a

man of taste,) declared were calculated to annihilate every conception of the beautiful in those who dwelt in them. But Annie Sherwood was too sad to notice anything, if her route had been through Arcadia.

END OF VOL. I.



